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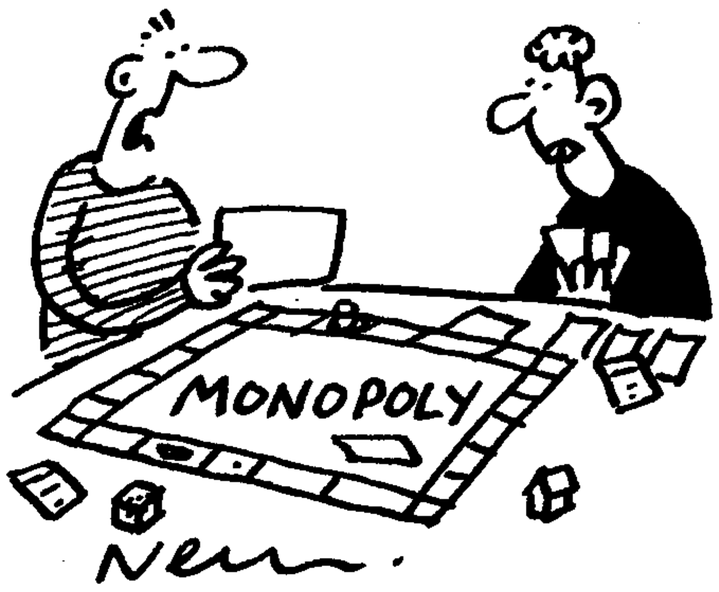

"Go directly to Jail. Do not pass Go. Do not have drinks with Gillian Shephard!"

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6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN. Tel: 020 7437 4017.
Fax: 020 7437 0705. **Email:** strobes@private-eye.co.uk
http://www.private-eye.co.uk

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ABC

Back to bonking!

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EDWINA Currie's latest headline-grabber has exceeded even her previous efforts at self-promotion whenever she has a new book out.

In September 1997 Ms Currie published *She's Leaving Home*, a book she admitted was "semi-autobiographical", and accompanied its release with the announcement that she was, er, leaving home and separating from her husband of 25 years, Ray.

The *Express* denounced her as "the vilest lady in Britain", and Currie sued for libel. A £30,000 settlement was announced in March 2000 – curiously, the same month that Currie's *Chasing Men* (the tale of a recently-divorced woman who finds a new career in the media), came out.

Now her slap 'n' tell memoirs appear not, as is traditional, at the start of the Tory conference but in the week of the Labour conference, thus cleverly taking the heat off Tony Blair by reminding everyone how sleazy the Tories were. The timing of these multiple betrayals has, in publicity terms at least, been perfect.

WHEN Richard Desmond failed to persuade his mate Greg Dyke to pull last week's television documentary "Porn Star", which probed the seedier aspects of the Dirty Des empire, his solicitor Nigel Tait at Peter Carter-Fuck wrote to BBC hack John Sweeney demanding an advance tape of the programme.

Sweeney wrote back to say it wasn't normal practice to make programmes available to predatory libel lawyers before transmission. The message was duly passed on by Carter-Fuck to Dirty Des's PR man Ian "Mad" Monk – who then emailed a friend, grumbling that this would be "a lawyer's bonanza in which RCD [Desmond] will get charged about £500 per hour for their crap letter-writing services!"

Alas! Monk hit the wrong key on his computer, and his complaint about the expense and uselessness of Carter-Fuck was emailed instead to… John Sweeney. The BBC man wrote back helpfully advising Monk of his error – and, even more helpfully, forwarded a copy of the original Monk message to Nigel Tait of Peter Carter-Fuck.

Will Desmond's solicitor now be suing Desmond's PR man for libel? We can but hope.

APPEARING on GMTV this week, Michael Barrymore was emphatic in his version of events surrounding the death of Stuart Lubbock.

Barrymore cited a hitherto unheard-from nurse who treated Lubbock after he was pulled from Barrymore's swimming pool last March, but who had mysteriously been unable to give evidence or attend the inquest into Mr Lubbock's death.

"He quite clearly states, without a shadow of a doubt, that when Stuart Lubbock arrived at the A&E department there were absolutely no injuries to his body," said Barrymore. "Absolutely none. There were no anal injuries. There is absolutely no question that any injuries of any kind happened to Stuart at my house."

There are two implications of this statement. Either Barrymore is accusing all four pathologists who studied Mr Lubbock's body (Dr Michael Heath; Professor Chris Milroy; Dr Ian Calder; and Professor Jack Crane) of lying; or he is claiming that someone at the Princess Alexandra Hospital in Harrow "inserted an object forcibly into the anus causing bruising and lacerations" after Mr Lubbock's death. Either suggestion is obviously libellous, and no doubt lawyers for all parties will be in touch with Mr Barrymore.

CAPITA'S pisspoor performance computerising the records of the criminal records bureau (CRB) has not just caused problems for schools needing to vet staff and helpers.

For example, magistrate Ray Khan's 14-year-old foster son has for the last six months been unable to have a sleepover at a friend's house.

Because the boy is in local authority care, his schoolfriend's parents have to be vetted. An application from his social worker was submitted last April, but Crapita has still not given clearance.

The Khan household feels doubly offended by Crapita. Mr Khan recently applied for one of the government's new 244 positions on employment tribunals. As a former teacher and magistrate, with experience of both tribunals (he used to sit on the old child support panels) and in personnel, he believed he met all the selection criteria.

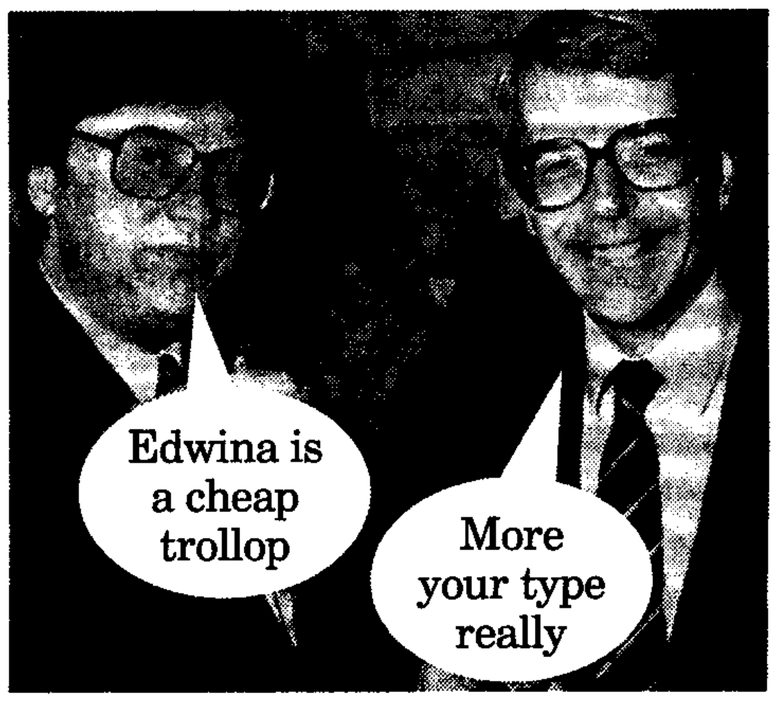
But a letter from RAS Capita, the firm's money-spinning recruitment wing, told him he'd been unsuccessful. It declined to give any feedback to help with further submissions though because "in view of the large number of applications, it would not be possible on this occasion". There's a surprise.

EVERYONE knows Sir William Stubbs had to fall on his sword as chairman of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority in the A-levels fiasco, but who does he leave behind on the QCA board?

It includes two top businessmen appointed by David Blunkett when he was education secretary. They are Ian McAllister, former managing director of Ford UK; and Terry Morgan, former managing director of BAe systems. Both men have since moved their main jobs to the rail transport industry. McAllister is chairman of Network Rail and Morgan is chief executive of Tube Lines, one of the private consortia destined to take over London Underground.

So at least two of the men responsible for keeping students on the right grades are also in charge of keeping trains and tubes on the right lines.

MELLOR BACKS MAJOR



Street Of Shame

COVERING the countryside march for the *Times*, elderly cub reporter William Rees-Mogg is struck by the protesters' violent hatred of Tony Blair.

"The slogans compared him to Hitler, because Hitler banned hunting, to Mugabe because Mugabe steals farms, and even, for reasons I cannot follow, to Osama Bin Laden."

And so to the next paragraph, with a classic Moggish non-sequitur. "English country people," he concludes, "are among the most tolerant, moderate and stable people I know."

IN LAST week's *Spectator* a furious Peter Oborne named and shamed the "villains" who didn't turn up for the countryside march – Michael Portillo, Guy Ritchie, racehorse trainer Martin Pipe, restaurateur John Mayhew, and countless others, including his colleagues Frank Johnson and Bruce Anderson.

Even being abroad at the time was no excuse. "Wafic Said, owner of one of Britain's great estates, was out of the country on the great day, but insists that he supported the march, and his family went," Oborne wrote. "This may be to his credit, but ultimately it is not good enough."

Alas! Only a few pages earlier, in the *Spectator* diary, Barbara Amiel boasted that she spent the previous weekend socialising in Manhattan. As a director of the Countryside Alliance's parish mag, the *Daily Telegraph* – and the wife of its proprietor, who also happens to own the *Spectator* – surely Amiel should have taken the trouble to fly back. True, she was clearly having a far more enjoyable time visiting her hairdresser, attending the opera and so forth; but, as Oborne observed, ultimately it is not good enough.

Why, then, did the fearless hack omit his boss's wife from the list of villains?

TIRELESS *Grauniad* hack David Hencke has spent many months badgering his friend Mike O'Brien MP to prove his commitment to open government by allowing Hencke to inspect the contents of his red box.

O'Brien rebuffed him, while insisting there was nothing interesting in the box anyway: "As a junior minister I just get lots of stuff from civil servants covering their arses."

Undaunted, Hencke recently started pestering the foreign office press office to force the minister to cooperate. And, eventually, O'Brien capitulated. "OK, Hencke," he told the boyish sleuth, "come into the ministry car-park now and I'll show you my box. There's nothing confidential in it."

Er, not quite. At the very top of the pile of papers was a document marked "Confidential". The jubilant hack hyperventilated with excitement. "Show me!" he yelled. "Show it to me now!" The document turned out to be a memo to the minister from his press office on the subject of, er, David Hencke. "Hencke is a total tosser," it read. "We suggest you tell him to fuck off."

RICHARD Desmond once boasted that he was happy to publish anything except "animals or Dutch".

But since announcing the sale of his top-shelf mags, it appears Britain's pornographer-in-chief is cleaning up his act. A lengthy interview with jungle love-rat Darren Day in last week's *OK!* referred coyly to someone being offended by him "f*rting".

WHEN Richard Desmond announced his intention to launch a Sunday edition of the *Daily Star* without employing any extra journalists, many inside and outside the grey Lubianka wondered how he would manage to fill the pages.

One answer was to plunder copy from elsewhere in the organisation; and eagle-eyed readers may have spotted that *Star World* magazine, free with *Sunday's Daily Star*, is an abridged but otherwise identical version of *Hot Stars*, given away every Saturday with Desmond's *OK!* magazine.

With a spectacular lack of shame, the current issue of *OK!* carries a half-page ad for the *Sunday Star*, using its "free NEW Sunday celebrity magazine" as a major selling point. The advert is even decorated with a cut-out of the *Star World* cover which is identical to the copy of *Hot Stars* bound in to the magazine just a few pages before.

NEVER mind that the *Times* outbid everyone for Edwina Currie's memoirs. It didn't stop the *Sunday Express* leading its front page with a huge "LOVE RAT JOHN MAJOR – BY EDWINA CURRIE" headline over an "exclusive" banner.

Reading on, though, it soon became clear that the paper did not in fact have an interview with Currie, but rather her equally shy and retiring daughter. She [Edwina] "decided to expose John Major as a love-cheat because she felt he had used her, according to her daughter Debbie."

It was only when readers reached paragraph three – conveniently placed over the page – that they found out the only original quotes in the piece actually came from "a close friend of former television presenter Debbie", who apparently "hadn't got a clue that her mother had an affair with John Major".

TOM PILSTON, an award-winning photographer on the *Independent*, was recently telephoned by the editor's secretary and told to drop everything and return to the office forthwith. Fearing the worst following the sacking of another award-winning photographer, he hurried in. When he arrived, however, it turned out that editor Simon Kelner needed to have his picture taken.

Pilston presumed it was to illustrate an article Kelner had written. But while waiting to do the photographs he noticed Kelner's secretary filling in an application for… a certain editor's new photo driving licence.

Pilston took three frames, one less than Kelner could have got from a photo-booth, and tried to recall just how it was that the paper acquired its reputation for great photojournalism.

NATIONAL newspapers recently received a letter from one Peter Forrest about the pay-off given to Gurbux Singh by the Commission for Racial Equality following his drunken brawl with a police officer.

"Dear Sir," Forrest wrote. "Schadenfreude is never an edifying spectacle, especially when perpetrated by reporters whose tales of drunken antics and fist-fights regularly entertain the readers of *Private Eye*. As the Conservative group leader on Labour-run Haringey for most of the time that Gurbux Singh was chief executive there, I carry no torch for him as a manager. But now he has lost everything and is probably unemployable. Which of us in these circumstances, with debts and with a mortgage to pay, would forgo their contractual right to severance pay? Certainly not ministers who have clung to their jobs despite lying to parliament or even newspaper editors who enriched themselves by insider dealing their paper's share-tipsters' intended-buy recommendations."

No fewer than three papers – the *Guardian*, *Daily Mail*, *Independent on Sunday* – published Forrest's letter. Curiously, however, all three of them edited out the reference to drunken hacks and the allusion to Piers "Morgan" Moron!

BRITAIN'S TOP SEXUAL ATHLETE

WHO says columnists use their job to pursue personal vendettas?

Jeremy Clarkson's *Sun* column on 6 September told the riveting tale of his run in with "Traffic Warden No53" outside Birmingham airport. "There were no queues and traffic was flowing well in the pick-up lanes… so why did traffic warden no53 decide, when I'd been stationary for less than a minute, that I had to move on?"

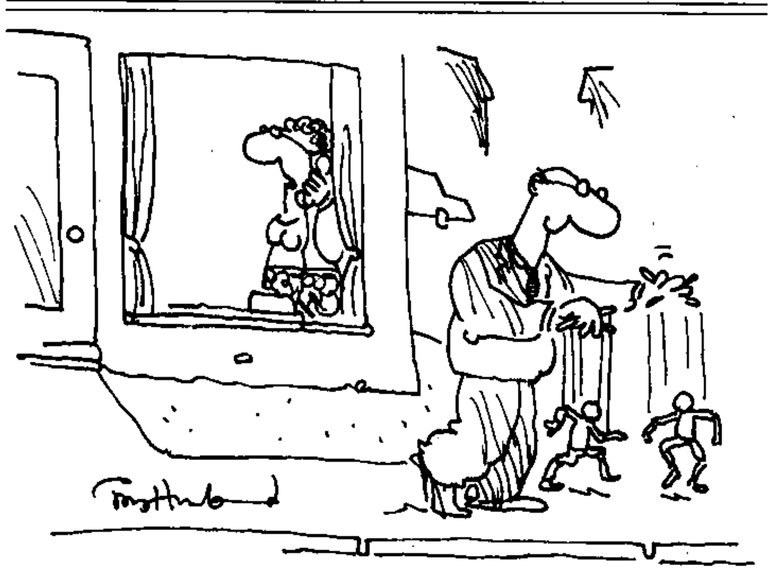
In a rant worthy of Michael Winner, Clarkson spent six paragraphs tearing the hapless warden to shreds. "Well, No53, eventually I was able to pick up my family. You, on the other hand, will always be fat, and ugly", he concluded, before bizarrely claiming all traffic wardens sell drugs "from under their hats."

The man in question, a traffic warden of 15 years' standing, has since received so much abuse from airport staff and drivers about the article that he has been signed off work with stress. Jeremy Clarkson continues to write his column.

"YES! Scots *are* racist, but only to the English." Thus the headline on a magnificently intemperate rant by Simon Heffer on the leader-page of last Wednesday's *Daily Mail*.

Complaining about the "almost pathological hatred of the English" north of the border, he described Scotland as a nation sunk in "corruption, a sense of inadequacy and, above all, a chippy jealousy of its bigger, richer, more outgoing neighbour… In the end, by disparaging those best placed to help them, the Scots will decline ever more into parochialism, isolation and poverty. They can then have a high old time up there, sitting around the peat fires, sipping their whisky and all hating the English together; but however much they do, it will never make them so happy, wealthy or wise as the folk south of Hadrian's Wall."

What did *Daily Mail* readers in Scotland make of this? Er, nothing. In its Scottish edition, the supposedly fearless *Mail* dropped Heffer's piece and replaced it with a far more measured article by former *Scotsman* editor Tim Luckhurst arguing that most Scots "are not remotely racist".



"My son… no, he's gone for a walk with some friends"

HACKWATCH

The Prince and the Paper

WHO leaked Prince Charles's why-oh-why letters? In last Wednesday's *Daily Mail*, Richard Kay and Geoffrey Levy denounced the leak as "a typically crude piece of New Labour news management... which came from a left-wing political source".

A *Mail* editorial the next day claimed the publication of Charles's letters to Lord Irvine was organised by Blairite ministers and "the party's friends in the media", with the "clear intention" of discrediting the prince.

All very plausible – except that the correspondence between the prince and the lord chancellor was leaked to, er, the *Daily Mail* via its royal hack Richard Kay. The *Mail*, far from being one of the party's friends, is the most unremittingly anti-Labour of all the tabloids. Prince Charles has since written to Blair apologising for the disclosure and acknowledging that the source was not a government apparatchik but one of his own "close associates".

But, as the recipient of the leak, the *Mail* knew that all along. So the thunderous editorials and lengthy features by Kay and Levy seem to have been a "typically crude" attempt to disguise the source by throwing suspicion on Downing Street.

The *Mail* may be no friend of Labour, but it is very friendly indeed with Mark Bolland, formerly the chief spin doctor at St James's Palace, who still handles the press on behalf of both Charles and Camilla as a freelance PR consultant. Pieces bearing Bolland's fingerprints often turn up in the paper under the byline of Richard Kay or "Ephraim Hardcastle" (aka Peter McHackey).

Last December, when the *Daily Telegraph* accused Bolland of briefing against other royals to improve Prince Charles's image, the *Daily Mail* sprang gallantly to his defence with a two-page feature by Messrs Kay and Levy, and several items by McHackey deploring the *Telegraph*'s "anti-Bolland propaganda". When *Mail* pundit Simon Heffer wrote a critical piece about Bolland he was obliged to publish it in the *Spectator* (since *Mail* editor Paul Dacre refuses to hear a word against the PR maestro) – and was then savaged by his own colleague Ephraim Hardcastle, who claimed that "Charles was furious at what he saw as a clumsy attempt to unseat his most trusted aide".

The curious love affair between the *Daily Mail* (which for many years took an anti-Charles line) and the prince's briefer-in-chief (who is, inter alia, a homosexual, and thus a most unlikely hero for Paul Dacre) was consummated earlier this year when Bolland hired as his PA one Jo Whitbred – who had for the previous 10 years been Paul Dacre's secretary.

Given all these lines of communication between the prince's PR man and Northcliffe House, it seems rather absent-minded of the *Daily Mail* not to mention Bolland as a possible culprit during its energetic mole-hunt. And the amnesia appears to be contagious. Monday's *Times* had a front-page piece claiming that "the finger of suspicion" had been pointed at Elizabeth Buchanan, an assistant private secretary at St James's Palace who advises the prince on rural affairs (though it added that Charles "does not think she leaked the information and her alleged role remains entirely unproven").

Again, however, no finger of suspicion was pointed at Mark Bolland. No doubt it is pure coincidence that the author of the *Times* piece, Andrew Pierce, is another friend and confidant of the ubiquitous royal spin-doctor.

Court Circular

PRINCE CHARLES inherited his letter-writing habit from his Uncle Dickie. As a teenager Charles would watch in awe as Mountbatten sat at his Admiralty desk writing to all and sundry, threatening ministers and summoning councils of the great and good.

It is not only politicians who get the benefits of Charles's opinions. The Queen and other royals regularly receive short, curt letters from him. His private office find his opinions more frequently expressed via a hand-written memo or a gruff note scrawled across their work than by word of mouth. Bishops routinely receive critiques of their sermons or doctrinal opinions.

Brenda has discussed her concerns with senior flunkeys and the matter of Charles's forthright opinions have been discussed with her by more than one prime minister. Prince Philip, on the other hand, doesn't see what the fuss is about. Once a great letter writer himself, he now prefers circling unfortunate ministers at receptions before pouncing on them with his views.

Although Brenda and Tony Blair have yet to formally discuss the matter, Buckingham Palace is formulating an idea for some sort of commission made up of politicians, academics and churchmen to establish a formal, meaningful role for the heir to the throne. That is for the future. How to keep the top on Charles's fountain pen in the meantime is anybody's guess.

'Flunkey'

Currie sources

"Few realise the damage Mrs Currie did to her undoubted political talents when she turned down a Home Office job in John Major's post-Election reshuffle. It was a gamble by Major to rescue a politician to whom he owed no favours."

— Black Dog, *Mail on Sunday*, 6 September 1992.

"But Edwina likes the current PM [Major]. Very much. She whacks him under the critical microscope all the same. He has, she says, 'a wonderful talent for not upsetting people. Margaret managed to convince everyone she disagreed with them, John convinces everyone who speaks to him that he agrees. He's done it with me, with everyone. Then he goes ahead and does exactly what he pleases. It's a very elegant form of bull. His manner is pleasant to everyone, but you can't flirt with him. He almost certainly doesn't see women as a separate species...' Her husband is accountant Ray Currie, a big, bluff man who seems impervious to the bossy streak in his wife's nature... It does seem a very solid marriage. Even when Edwina was working 16 hours a day as a health minister, she says they still had a sex life: 'You've got to develop a lot of stamina.'"

— Corinna Honan, *Daily Mail*, 19 October 1992.

"In a recent interview, she [Currie] remarked that during official dinners, there was a `barrier' between her and John Major, and that this was only right and proper. What did she mean? That if he was not the PM and she was not an MP, then... he's only a man after all... how could he ignore his priapic urges, how could he not rip off her print frock and ravish her right there on the spot?"

— Jan Moir, *Guardian*, 24 January 1994.

"The sex in her novel, she points out, makes a serious point about the strain politics puts on marriages. 'I was lucky,' she says, explaining how hers survived. 'The real temptation is that you spend so much time here that you find your family has disintegrated. I have a good-looking husband, and that helps. And when I first got here I was also very ambitious. I spoke more than 50 times in debate in two and a half years. I was too damn busy.'"

— Interview with Edwina Currie, *Observer*, 30 January 1994.

"The heroine of our story is one Elaine Stalker, a newly elected MP on a steep learning curve... There are some problems in sorting fact from fiction; real figures inhabit Mrs Currie's literary landscape and this device leads to potential confusion. Will Mr Major unwittingly find himself between the sheets with the ambitious Mrs Stalker?"

— Penny Fox on Edwina Currie's novel *A Parliamentary Affair*, *The Scotsman*, 31 January 1994.

"My female colleagues here [in Parliament] all agree: women journalists ask us these personal questions. Men ask us what we think about Northern Ireland. Women feature writers, for some reason, can't do it in any intellectual fashion at all, so they ask us intensely personal questions which are embarrassing, intrusive, rude and bloody irrelevant. That's what really gets up my nose."

— Interview with Edwina Currie, *The Scotsman*, 31 January 1994.

"She... is reputed to have turned down the opportunity of ministerial office in John Major's Cabinet — but we can't discuss it: 'What bores me rigid is talking about the past.'"

— Interview with Edwina Currie, *The Scotsman*, 31 January 1994

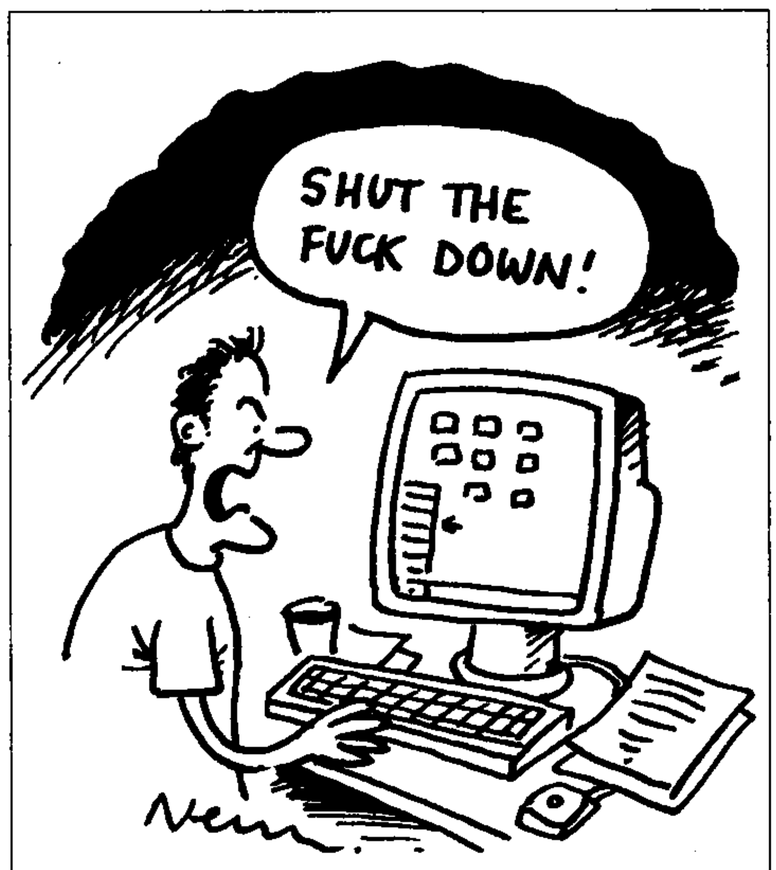
O·B·N

"When he walked out of his bedroom, with his hair pulled back and his skin clear of make-up, my heart lurched. I had been unconsciously prepared for facial scars, even deformity, because of the constant drip-drip of lies and slanders. In fact, his face is strong and serene, and his skin is beautiful – shining, almost translucent. He glows with an aura of energy. His shirt was open, revealing a lithe chest. All the clever words I had rehearsed fell away: I said his name, he said mine and we embraced. I knew at this moment that I had found a lifelong friend."

URI GELLER
(on Michael Jackson)

Submitted by Danie Malan.

£10 paid for entries put forward for the Order of the Brown Nose.



Quentin Tarantino logs off

CONFERENCE NEWS

THE more-bigger-airports-now lobby flew into Blackpool in force for this year's Labour party conference.

On Monday night delegates were due to dance the night away at a disco sponsored by the British Airports Authority. And on Tuesday transport minister John Spellar was expected to speak at a meeting of the Airport Operators Association (AOA), wine and buffet provided, sharing the platform with no fewer than three luminaries from the airport industry.

They were: Roger Cato, managing director of Gatwick Airport, AOA member and chair of the meeting; Keith Jowett, AOA chief executive; and Labour's Baroness Dean, the former union leader Brenda Dean, who has taken on yet another part time job as chair of Freedom to Fly, the pro-airports lobby group paid for by the air industry.

The baroness, who is a member of the appointments commission that ensures new members of the Lords are sleaze-free must be delighted that Freedom to Fly has already got a big foot in the ministerial door by hiring John Prescott's chief transport adviser, Joe Irvin.

THERE's no such thing as a free breakfast – even when it's paid for by the power generator Innogy.

On the Wednesday of the Labour party conference, delegates were due to be fed early by Innogy and the Business Council for Sustainable Energy, the quid pro quo being that they had to listen to energy minister Brian Wilson and Brian Count, £300,000-plus-a-year Innogy chief executive, lecture on sustainable energy.

Wilson and Count were due to speak at another Innogy-sponsored meeting, "Labour's Sustainable Energy Policy: Helping the Poor?" on Wednesday evening; and the firm sponsored an IPPR meeting on "Sustainable Development After Johannesburg" with the Environment Agency's Barbara Young on conference Monday.

Innogy has made some green moves, generating and selling wind-powered electricity in Britain. But it remains a massive generator of conventional power. It is owned by German multinational RWE, whose subsidiaries push hard to join the green business bandwagon. Brian Count and Innogy are active in the UK Business Council for Sustainable Energy, which sent a delegation to the Johannesburg earth summit. And RWE's other British subsidiary, Thames Water, is active in the international group Business Action for Sustainable Development.

Though RWE and Innogy are keen to back voluntary pollution codes, they act differently when the bottom line is threatened. Earlier this year RWE president Dr Dietmar Kuhnt warned that he would cancel building a German power station unless rules on carbon emissions were relaxed. Dr Kuhnt said 4,000 jobs would be lost at the station "if its profitability is jeopardised by unreasonably stringent sanctions or carbon dioxide penalties".

RWE's other British subsidiary, Thames Water, also likes to make green gestures. Tony Blair took Thames boss Bill Alexander with him to Johannesburg. But Thames is repeatedly prosecuted for causing pollution in the UK and is currently defending a massive Turkish water plant at Ismit, where officials are being investigated for bribery.

RWE's other subsidiary, NUKEM, continues to propagate the nuclear gospel, working closely with BNFL in Britain, despite a colourful history of bribes and lawbreaking.

BRITAIN's "ethical" arms sales policy couldn't be in safer hands following the appointment of Alan Garwood as new head of DESO, the defence export services organisation which employs 6,000 people to sell weapons to other countries.

Garwood is chief operating officer of MBDA Missile Systems, two of whose biggest export markets are in Saudi Arabia (a dictatorship) and Pakistan (another dictatorship). Thanks to Mr Garwood, MBDA has also established strong links with Israel, where the "Spike" anti-tank missile is made jointly by MBDA and the Israeli company, Rafael.

How much will Mr Garwood earn in his new job? No one will say. Obviously £87,000 a year, the civil service salary, is not enough to attract experienced merchants of death like Mr Garwood, so the defence industry has generously agreed to club together to make his salary respectable.

THE competition commission has made an interesting choice in appointing David Roberts, the director of strategic management at Sainsbury's, as its new business adviser. But will anyone at the commission dare refer Roberts to the commission's report in 2000 on... supermarkets?

That report carried serious criticism of Sainsbury's, which "contributed to the situation in which the majority of their products were not fully exposed to competitive pressure and distorted the supply of groceries".

Even harsher criticism was reserved for the treatment of suppliers by the big supermarkets. Of course if anyone has any complaint about the competition commission's treatment of such matters while Mr Roberts is its business adviser, they can always complain to the relevant ministry, the department of trade and industry, and directly to one of its junior minister – a certain Lord Sainsbury!

WHAT safer or more dependable company could you imagine than Johnson & Johnson, the people who make baby powder?

No doubt it was the company's homespun reputation that persuaded health secretary Alan Milburn to choose it to build and run 20 new hospitals in Britain. Alas, no sooner was the government's memorandum of understanding with Johnson & Johnson signed than the company's shares began to slide.

The problem was a mysterious former employee, as yet unnamed, who says he or she was sacked for whistleblowing about the results of tests on the firm's drug, Eprex. The claim – that results were deliberately falsified – is so widely believed that the shares are slumping.

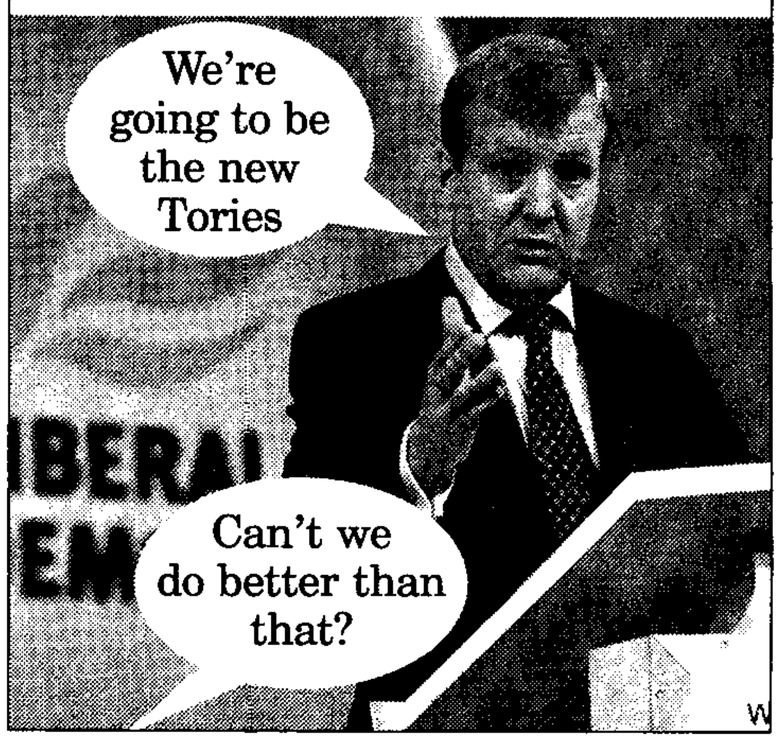
THE government has sold the handful of cooks, cleaners and gardeners (mostly part-timers) who work in Britain's probation hostels to Morrisons, now part of the Anglian Water group.

The move, by the home office's national probation directorate, went ahead despite being condemned for breaching the government's own privatisation guidelines. The office of government commerce found 22 flaws in the process, including the rather fundamental one that no proper business case had been made for the sale.

This has already become obvious to Napo, the probation staff union, which says most of the 101 hostels report that cleaning, cooking and cutting the grass is going to cost them an extra £20,000 a year. This will have to come out of already stretched budgets. Only one hostel seems to have saved a few pounds on the deal. In London alone there is likely to be a shortfall of between £400,000 to £500,000. In addition, some hostels report worse services at greater cost where, for example, two meals a day are being provided instead of three.

Undeterred by the poor value for money, the home office is determined to keep pouring good taxpayers' money after bad. Next up for grabs is a £52m contract for the probation service office estate.

LIB DEM SHOCK



"THE condition of this kitchen... is now so poor that should an Environmental Health Officer from the local council visit a six week improvement notice followed by closure... is a very real risk."

So said a team of independent inspectors investigating an office canteen in the Westminster area, noting in passing no fewer than 14 "breaches of legal requirements and/or good practice for hygenic preparation of food", including cupboards which were "a harbour for bacteria", freezers which failed to reach the safe temperature for food storage, broken tiles and fly screens and badly designed preparation spaces that meant "it is only a matter of time before a serious accident occurs".

It was all most embarrassing for the managers who commissioned the report – not least because the canteen in question is at the department for the environment, food and rural affairs.

THE road lobby has scored another victory for the Grim Reaper, fending off a scurrilous attempt to cut the 1,000 deaths a year which are linked to people who work as drivers.

Under its strategy *Tomorrow's Roads – Safer for Everyone*, the government proposed workplace safety regulations for truckers, bus and coach drivers, taxi drivers and others. After all, health and safety executive (HSE) rules cover nearly every other employee in the country, including train and tram drivers.

The road lobby, though, was having none of it. It was horrified that this would increase costs for road companies and lessen the competitive advantage they enjoy over railways. Happily, the HSE has backed down. In any case, it doesn't have the resources to oversee road companies; and nor did it ask for them because it is "not sure what needs doing and where", said the HSE's Sharon Bains.

'Backbiter'

Number crunchings

2 ■ number of times Saddam's 1988 chemical attack on Halabja is cited by government dossier as justification for attacking Iraq

2 ■ number of UN resolutions condemning Iraq for the attack that Britain opposed or abstained from at the time

"The Israelites have developed weapons of musical destruction"

TAX CUTTINGS

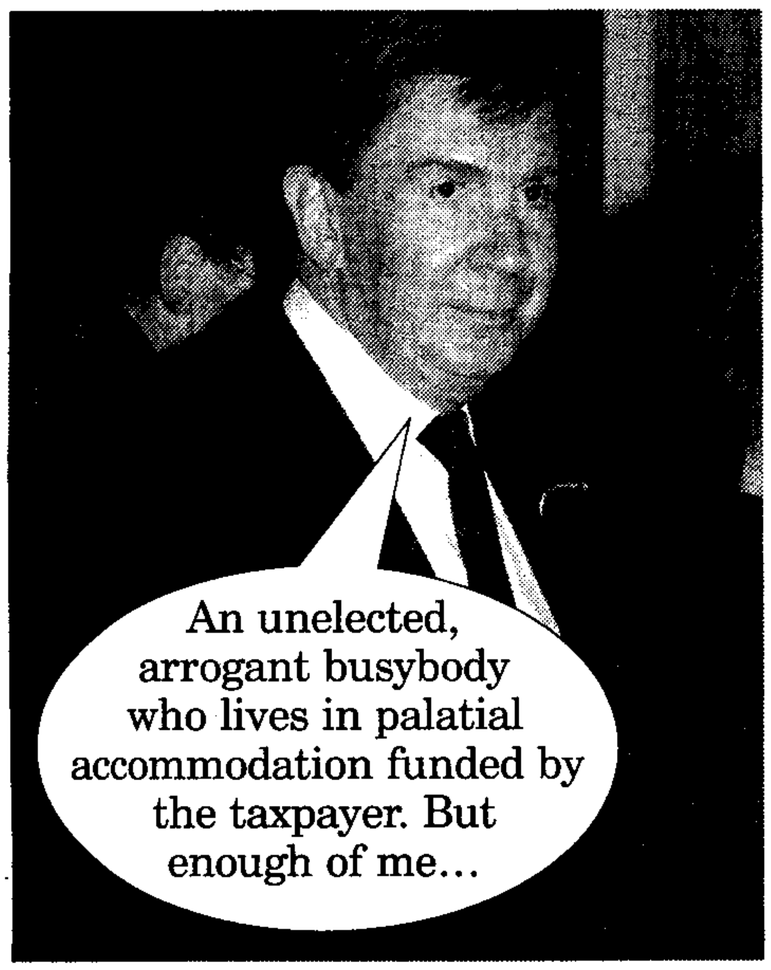
A FIASCO to rival the privatisation of the criminal records bureau (CRB) is brewing in the Inland Revenue's information technology service, which in 1994, along with 2,300 Inland Revenue staff, was transferred to private firm EDS (*Eyes passim*).

EDS's goal was to implement a system called the Computerised Environment for Self Assessment (Cesa) by 2005. The target was for more than half the UK's nine million self-assessment taxpayers to be filing online by that date. The system first went live in April 2000, with the expectation that in the first year 315,000 self-assessment forms would be submitted via the internet. But only 39,000 forms were – despite a "special offer" of £10 off tax bills for those using the online service.

In the following year, 2001-2002, only 75,000 people used the internet service, 1.25 million short of EDS's target. Highlights of the second year of the EDS operation included the service being offline for the whole of May, after users reported seeing details of other people's tax returns, while most Mac computer users were unable to connect to the site at all. In total it is estimated that four out of every five attempts to submit self-assessment forms via Cesa have been unsuccessful. EDS spent £4.4m advertising the online "service".

The Inland Revenue has announced that EDS's target for the current tax year has been reduced from 2.5 million online registrations to 800,000, but EDS is still likely to fall well short of this too. Whether the £200m spent implementing Cesa represents value for taxpayers must be in some doubt: the cost of each successfully submitted self-assessment tax return via the internet has so far been £3,200.

LORD IRVINE ON CHARLES



ENERGY NEWS

THE latest upheaval in the nuclear generating industry, which has resulted in a £400m bail-out for British Energy, throws the spotlight on all those lawyers who at a succession of public inquiries down the years approved the building of the power stations now producing a mountain of nuclear waste, and the Sellafield complex which is supposed to be disposing of it.

The longest inquiry was for Sizewell B. It lasted 340 days, spread over more than two years, and ended with the inspector, Sir Frank Layfield, declaring: "I have concluded that it should be cost-saving to build Sizewell B... The probability of a coal station having lower costs than Sizewell B is very small." How did such a distinguished legal luminary reach such a wrong decision?

He listened patiently to all the objectors from the Town and Country Planning Association, the Council for the Protection of Rural England, the Stop Sizewell B Association (largely local objectors), advocates of wind and wave power and a collection of barefoot nuclear experts, and made no attempt to curtail their speeches or their cross-examination of the witnesses.

He did this to annoy the government, whose then energy secretary Nigel Lawson had refused to allow the objectors to charge for legal representation. Layfield preferred to deal with lawyers who knew and observed the rules of the Bar. Instead he had to handle a group of undisciplined individuals. So he let them rabbit on and then took nearly two years more to produce his report.

In the end, like most of the other planning lawyers, he came down on the side of the government. They are all, of course, aware that future employment on this sort of inquiry depends on the government; but they do not (perish the thought) allow this to influence them in their findings.

Among the lawyers at the inquiry was Michael Howard QC, who represented the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate and can now, as shadow chancellor, revel in the huge cost falling on the government which he helped to bring about.

NGO AREAS

THE annual report of Transparency International, the Berlin-based non-governmental organisation (NGO) which calls itself "the coalition against corruption", is full of heartening stories about conquering bribery in Senegal, Argentina, Serbia, Bulgaria and Sierra Leone.

It also tells how GRECO – the Council of Europe Group of States against Corruption – has welcomed in the US and together they have reviewed corruption everywhere from Cyprus to Sweden. The NGO insists a firm stand is being taken against bribery by the Organisation of American States, the modern US equivalent of Britain's old Colonial Office, and the Free Trade Area of the Americas, a body which is as independent of US government as Siamese twins are independent.

What is transparent in Transparency International's report, though, is the complete lack of reference to corruption at the heart of capitalism itself. No tales of murky deals uncovered at Halliburton. No whiff from Enron or Arthur Anderson. Nothing from the World Bank. Not a word about Jack Welch, the giant of General Electric, seen in the US as the world's greatest businessman but whose immensely profitable hornswoggling has just been revealed by his former wife.

The small print does offer a tentative explanation though. Donations to Transparency International are acknowledged from Enron and Arthur Anderson; and the board of directors includes Frank Vogl, former PR man for the World Bank; an unknown German who served it for 30 years; and Fritz F. Heimann from – where else? – General Electric.

DOWN ON THE FARM

A RECENT scene in a small Yorkshire slaughterhouse provided a perfect vignette of why Britain's meat industry has in the past decade been brought to the edge of extinction.

The firm's four-man workforce was being watched by no fewer than five government officials. Two meat inspectors were being supervised by an official veterinary surgeon (OVS). The OVS, a Greek, was being supervised by a principal OVS. All these in turn were being monitored by an official from Defra's state veterinary service.

John Chadwick, chairman of the Small Abattoirs Federation, likes to sum up the history of the meat industry as having begun with no more than a beast and a slaughterman. Then the slaughterman was joined by a part-time meat inspector, making occasional visits on behalf of the local council. Then the meat inspectors became full-time. Then in the early 1990s, under European Union (EU) hygiene rules, the abattoir had to pay for its inspectors to be supervised by a vet (because on the continent vets do the work of meat inspectors, although, thanks to the Maffia, of course, we had to have both).

Not surprisingly, the cost of paying for this proliferation of officials – with vets charging up to £65 an hour – was a key reason, during the 1990s, that more than half Britain's remaining abattoirs were forced to close. Between 1990 and 1999 numbers fell from more than 850 to around 400, leaving large areas of the country without any local slaughterhouse. The only reason more firms were not forced to close was that, in a pitiful bid to minimise the cost of the new system, Maff allowed smaller abattoirs to pay for the presence of the vets only when there was something for them to do. But in 1999 Brussels decided the British were not playing by the rules and insisted that vets must be on the premises full time, whether there was work for them or not.

This ruling, backed by the threat of huge fines, threatened final meltdown for much of what remained of Britain's meat industry. So grave was the crisis hanging over Britain's countryside that dozens of national organisations, including the National Trust and the RSPB, implored the government to find a compromise. At the eleventh hour, MAFF agreed in 2000 that the abattoirs could be saved by changing the basis on which they were charged. Instead of paying for inspection by the hour, the firms would be charged on a "headage" basis, according to the numbers of animals slaughtered. Although this provoked fury from the big industrial abattoirs, which lost their huge commercial advantage from killing thousands of animals a week, it was enough to save nearly 300 medium-size and small abattoirs from extinction.

Although slaughterhouses have still been driven out of business by soaring costs, at least the closure rate has been slower than in the 1990s. But clouds are again looming. Brussels has insisted that charging by "headage" is against EU rules. Britain must therefore return to paying for inspection by the hour: in other words, to the system which can only result in closing down every small and medium-size abattoir which survives.

For what has long been the most highly regulated meat industry in Europe, it looks as though the end may finally be nigh. The supermarkets will then be free to import as much meat as they like from countries which aren't stupid enough to cripple their industry with ever more insane regulatory costs; and they will no longer have to face criticism for buying cheaper imported meat, because there won't be any British meat left to buy.

'Muckspreader'

FTVE

Steve Leonard's Extreme Animals (BBC1)
Wild Weather (BBC1)

THERE is bad television, botched television, cynical television and lazy television. But most of all there is dull television, great rolling prairies of the stuff, filling schedules simply because there are schedules that need to be filled. Millions of us open *Radio Times* and can't find a single thing we want to watch. And we're not wrong. Watching Steve Leonard and his *Extreme Animals*, or Donal MacIntyre and his *Wild Weather*, is like being smothered by a giant 20-tog duvet of boredom.

Animals first, and the mysterious Steve Leonard, who seems to have appeared from nowhere. Who is he and why are all his animals so extreme? As viewers wrestle with these conundrums, they are treated to bash-clatter-colour-effects-splash-bang-whoosh credits, which reassure them this is a modern up-to-date wildlife programme, and not one of those old-fashioned ones narrated by Martin Jarvis that are now shown on BBC2.

Leonard himself is intrepid, circling the earth several times in half an hour and repeatedly risking his life to show you animals you saw several years ago on *Life On Earth*. Japanese snow monkeys! Quick cut to king penguins on South Georgia! Then it's off to Minnesota to say hello to hibernating black bears! No item merits more than a couple of minutes, as BBC1 attention spans are short and will snap if stretched. Most items are shot on video on the run and then intercut with film from proper wildlife programmes.

The one constant is Steve himself, with his designer stubble, unquenchable enthusiasm and Murray Walker-like emphases. Sometimes he pauses for effect. Right in the middle of a sentence. Occasionally there are wry self-conscious punchlines in the manner of Jeremy Clarkson. But at all times there's an earnest desire to explain things slowly with a slightly patronising air. Whoever you are, you will watch this programme wondering who it's aimed at but knowing it's not you. This can't be the idea. Can it?

Wild Weather, meanwhile, solves the problem of what to do with Donal MacIntyre, short of recycling him for dog food. MacIntyre became a BBC1 face fronting a series of gimmicky hidden camera undercover investigations, one of which proved so inaccurate it saw the corporation capitulate in a major libel action. Still, as one door closes, another opens... even if it's the sort of tired, weather-related documentary series we have already seen a thousand times elsewhere.

Clouds moving quickly. Rain battering buildings. Tornadoes. Tidal waves. Sunny spells with scattered showers. The USP this time is that it's cuddly Donal standing in the wind tunnel or flying through the troposphere for our entertainment. No less intrepid than Steve, he at least has time to shave every day and can finish sentences in a single breath. But the didacticism remains intact. "The speed of wind is measured using something called the Beaufort Scale," he says very deliberately. It's the "something called" that gives it away: anything too complicated will repel viewers. Keep technical terms to a minimum. Show Donal doing a parachute jump instead.

'Couch Potato'

Plugged In

SEALED WITH X

Agents Fox Mulder and Dana Scully finally kiss in the last episode of the X Files sci-fi drama on Sky One tonight.

— Page 7 "news" story, *Sun*, 26 September.

An occasional column devoted to cross-media plugs masquerading as news.

BIRTSPEAK

"The bright, modern spiral represents the springs of power. The idea emerged from an away day in January when the whole team was asked to write down words associated with parliament – words like power, debate, argument."

— BBC parliament editor Peter Knowles on the channel's squiggly new logo

DUMB BRITAIN

Breakfast Show, Wave 105 FM

Steve Powers: What does a planet orbit around?

Contestant 1: The galaxy?

Contestant 2: The moon?

Lunchtime show, BRMB

Presenter: What religion was Guy Fawkes?

Contestant: Jewish.

Presenter: That's close enough.

The Weakest Link, BBC2

Anne Robinson: What "B" was a pseudonym used by Charles Dickens?

Contestant: Bart Simpson.

DUMB AMERICA

Family Feud (US version of Family Fortunes)

Host: Name a word that a dog understands.

Contestant: Ruff.

SPLIT personalities

Bob Moore

Arlel Sharon Watts

MEDIA NEWS

"THERE is a need for a strong factual strategy across all of our channels," said Jana Bennett, BBC director of television, last week. "The documentary needs to be reasserted as a really important form of TV."

Two days later the BBC's general factual department set about making this happen, with the following email to all staff from Donna Taberer, its managing editor.

"Between now and February (the next commissioning round) we will need substantially fewer staff. Therefore while we will of course do all we can to find work for staff who are due to finish project-related contracts during that period, we cannot guarantee further work. As before we will advertise jobs in the bulletin and we would advise you to apply for all suitable posts. We would also encourage you to look to other departments in the BBC for work. I appreciate how depressing this news is..."

NEWS that the under-30s know little or nothing about classical music prompted the Guardian Guide to send ex-NME writer Johnny Sharp out to test some callow youths on their musical knowledge.

The youngsters scored dismally – as did Sharp himself, when he quoted an expert opinion from "violinist Julian Lloyd Webber". Lloyd Webber is probably the world's best known cellist.

LAST Tuesday the BBC broadcast a *Money Programme* special called "Porn Star" about the seedy activities of Richard "Dirty" Desmond.

This presented a delicate problem for the compilers of the *Sunday Express* TV guide the previous weekend. But they rose to the challenge magnificently. Here's their listing in full: "*Money Programme* special: financial reports from around the world."

AD NAUSEAM

RICHARD "Dirty" Desmond's *Express* seized eagerly on the news that the *Daily Mail* had been "slammed" by the advertising watchdog for misleading readers over a cheap flights deal.

"*Mail* flight scam is exposed," said the headline on page 8 on 18 September under a picture of editor Paul Dacre, going on to tell of "bad news for the Daily Malicious". The ASA rebuke was because although the *Mail* had claimed there were "no hidden extras and no hidden supplements" in its recent BA bonanza when there were.

No doubt hacks in the *Mail*'s instant rebuttal unit are already thumbing through *Eye* 1047 which reported in February on a catalogue of misleading *Express* once-in-a-lifetime giveaways, which attracted six "slammings" from the ASA in 12 months. These included misleading promotions for "Free Concert Tickets for Every Reader", "Free Anti-Fat Pills that Really Work" and "Return Flights All Over the USA for Every Reader."

THE *Sun*'s ever-diligent City pages on 20 September swooped on the shocking news that DIY store B&Q had also been rapped by the tireless ASA for yet more misleading advertising.

"B&Q took out two adverts in national newspapers saying its prices were cheaper… than rival Homebase", ran the story, before concluding that "the watchdog ordered B&Q not to use a similar approach in future."

That was on page 46, subtitled "The Page You Can Trust". On page 30 there was a full-page advert for B&Q that read: "Homebase discount day? These products cost less at B&Q."

COULD the most feted advert in history also have been misleading?

All adland agrees that Guinness advertising remains an oasis of excellence. Its famed "Surfer" ad, which broke all the rules by representing the crests of waves with the ingenious metaphor of "white horses", was voted the best advert of all time last year by Channel 4 viewers and its tagline was "Good things come to those who wait."

Now, though, it seems good things such as Guinness can come to those who don't wait. Guinness is beginning trials of a new FastPour system in some London pubs, which cuts the time taken to serve a pint from 119 seconds to 25. But the advert said: "It takes 119 seconds to pour the perfect pint of Guinness." Confusion reigns.

WHEN it comes to misleading claims, it's hard to beat BT, which has also taken a mauling over the veracity of its advertising. In particular its internet service in various guises – BT Openworld, BT Surftime or BT Anytime – has been exposed by the ASA for making promises it can't keep.

One claimed that BT's Broadband service made your business "40 times faster", when it didn't. Another offered "a reliable service", when it wasn't. This may be why in its new push for broadband internet, BT has decided to make the claims for its service so outlandish they are palpably implausible: the ads feature three-headed dragons and animated pigs emerging from a broken broadband "pipe" and feature Pulp frontman Jarvis Cocker for no apparent reason. They are costing BT £1m a day to air.

HUNT NEWS

HAVING spent years blocking attempts by the pro-hunting lobby to get its representatives on to the National Trust's ruling council, outgoing NT chairman Charles Nunnely has just performed a most peculiar and puzzling *volte face*.

Nunnely usually thwarts the hunters by casting his large chairman's proxy vote in favour of less contentious candidates at the AGM. This year, however, he has endorsed two heavyweight hopefuls representing the militant wing of the pro-hunting set – Clarissa "Fat Lady" Dixon-Wright and Nicholas "Fatty" Soames MP. His backing for the pair is confirmed by the asterisks he has placed next to their names on the voting papers circulated to the trust's two million members.

Why on earth, in the run-up to his last AGM, has Nunnely gone over to the other side and in the process handed the NT's director-general Fiona Reynolds a potential can of worms as a parting gift? For an answer we need look only a few hundred yards up the road from the trust's HQ in Queen Anne's Gate – to St James's Palace, residence of HRH the Prince of Wales.

After the death of the Queen Mum, the NT's long-serving patron, it was assumed Charles would replace her. He is already the trust's vice-president and had effectively been the patron in recent years because of his grandmother's failing health. But the prince informed the trust that unless and until it came up with "a suitable memorial in honour of all the good work my grandmother did for the trust during her years as its patron", then not only would he refuse to take on the role, but he'd dump Sophie Wessex on them instead.

This horrific prospect set the chickens squawking at Queen Anne's Gate. Fiona Reynolds, who came into office claiming she would wrest the charity from the clutches of the establishment cronies infesting its upper reaches, gave in at once. A "suitable memorial" is duly being planned, in the form of a rose-garden.

Can it be that Charles, who cares passionately about hunting, has now used his arm-lock on the trust by threatening not to become patron unless his chum Fatty Soames and the Fat Lady join the council? And will Nunnely's devotion to the cause be rewarded with a glittering bauble in the next honours list?

PS: In the personal statement she made to members when standing for election, Clarissa Dixon-Wright claimed to have "been a member of the National Trust for many years", when in fact she had only just joined. The Trust failed to notice this little memory lapse until after the voting papers were sent out. But when they did finally challenge her, the Fat Lady replied: "I've been an alcoholic for years, too – you can't expect me to remember everything."

almless–A levels

Heading, p. 463, Collins French Dictionary

Warballs

"I write to you because I am very angry with the youth or adult who stole my recycling bin on Friday. I left it where I normally do and when I got back home some cheeky monkey had taken it. I know since 11 September things have changed, but taking a recycling bin is bad."

— Letter in *Worthing Herald.*

"I write this review the weekend after 11 September 2001. In New York City 168 are confirmed dead, 4,500+ reported missing. By the time this review appears in print, I hope that *Speculum* readers will have moved away from bickering and toward consensus on the absolute value of openly, proudly helping to create the next generation of potential medievalists. Diana Childress is head and neck out front."

— Betsy Bowden reviewing a book by Childress in *Speculum, A Journal of Medieval Studies* (journal of the Medieval Academy of America), July 2002.

"Microscopic particles that could have proved whether or not the shroud of Turin could be dated to around the time of the death of Christ have been destroyed by Vatican scientists… Shroud custodians say the work had to be carried out in secret as the Vatican feared the relic could have become a target for attack in the wake of 11 September."

— *Sunday Herald.*

SUPERMODELS
KERBER
CHARITY SHOP
HI WE'RE MODELS AND IT'S THE HOT NEW THING TO BUY CLOTHES IN CHARITY SHOPS
WILL OUR MONEY GO TO A GOOD CAUSE?
IT'LL BE USED TO BUY FOOD TO FEED POOR PEOPLE
GOD THAT'S SO CRUEL!!!
EVIL WOMAN!!!

SIGNAL FAILURES

How they are related Pt 2

THE loyalty of Richard Bowker, head of the strategic rail authority (SRA), towards his former employer may be ringing ministerial alarm bells.

After the last *Eye* highlighted concessions to Virgin by Bowker – formerly Virgin Rail's co-chairman – transport secretary Alistair Darling gave him a grilling. Darling is worried the west-coast mainline renewal, devised by Railtrack and Virgin, could become a permanent millstone round the industry's neck. Stephen Byers, who appointed Bowker, was happy to ignore the potential conflict of interest but Darling may not be.

Bowker clarified his policy of favouring Virgin in a speech last month. He blamed Railtrack for the west-coast disaster and said Virgin's side of the deal was "a rather better story", with one of the route's Pendolino trains running "for the first time in public service on 23 July". He forgot to add that:

- Some of the most ambitious aspects of the project were devised by Virgin, aided by consultant Jim Steer (now an SRA director).
- 22 Pendolinos should have been serviceable by June but none was.
- The Pendolino that began public service on 23 July was taken out of use 10 days later.
- No Pendolino was now in service.
- Richard Branson delayed the new trains by altering aesthetic specifications.

Bowker said replacing Virgin's west-coast franchise "at this stage would have incurred additional costs right at a time when I need every penny I've got without wasting it on processes that add no value". So there's a separate strategy for Virgin, parallel to the general one Bowker published in January which states: "The SRA's short-term priority is to address the cost pressures from train operations by refranchising, which will deliver best value through competition."

Bowker will "hold good" the franchise – SRA-speak for giving Virgin £106m for now and waiving £1.5bn of premiums promised by Virgin. In the speech Bowker said "cost control" and "operating performance" threatened rail's chances of success. Yet the new Virgin deal is hardly a textbook example of cost control (and few passengers would describe Virgin's operating performance as exemplary). Now a rolling-stock company is warning a £3.5bn shortfall in the SRA's 10-year plan will mean cruddy trains for many more years on regional franchises (not operated by Virgin).

Jim Steer isn't the only former colleague Bowker has appointed instead of calling back some of the capable BR managers kicked out at privatisation. David Bailey, a director at London Underground when Bowker was a trainee there, is now the SRA's non-executive director at Network Rail. "I have worked with David over a number of years," explained Bowker.

From LU Bowker moved to American bank Babcock and Brown. When the SRA began planning a huge loan for rail schemes last spring it approached Babcock and Brown, which has also been given a platform at a two-day SRA conference this month.

Any resemblance between "Tony's cronies" and Bowker's methods may not be entirely coincidental. Bowker seems to have helped the PM not only by accompanying Tony's guitar playing while on holiday (see last *Eye*) but by creating the post of media director for Ceri Evans, who was due a reward for defecting from the Tories to Labour just before the last general election.

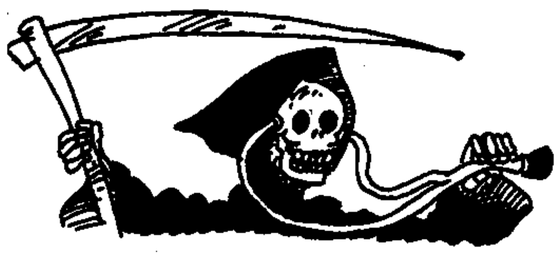
The SRA already had a director of corporate affairs, a press office and PR consultants; but perhaps Bowker expects to need Evans' combative experience with lost causes: Evans was campaign director for Steve Norris's mayoral bid and before that media adviser for, er, John Major and William Hague.

- When South West Trains installed an electronic information screen at Totton station, Hampshire, it invited local Tory MP Dr Julian Lewis along to have his picture taken.

The screens tell fuming passengers the time a train is due as well as the time it is actually expected to arrive in the real world. How typical that when Lewis stood under the Totton sign to be snapped, the board showed the 1238 to Waterloo was nearly 15 minutes late and not expected until 1252.

Happily, when the picture appeared in South West Trains' *In Focus* magazine, the late "expected" time was no longer visible. If only delays could be airbrushed away like that in the real world…

'Dr B. Ching'



DOING THE ROUNDS

Bristol revisited

THE real test of how far the NHS has progressed "post Bristol" is not the number of "new" Labour quangos claiming to deliver openness and accountability but the experience of patients themselves. Judging by the appalling treatment Lauren Devine, Gordon Cooke and their late son Tom received, the NHS may well be regressing – not least in Bristol itself.

Tom was born with catastrophic brain damage after a failed home delivery and subsequent emergency Caesarean section at St Michael's hospital, Bristol, on 20 June 2000. Lauren and Gordon, who have two healthy children born in Bristol, believe the midwives failed to act on major risk factors that indicated a home delivery was unsuitable. They also have evidence that notes were falsified to imply that Lauren was to blame for the tragedy.

After the birth, Tom was entered into a clinical trial when his parents believed he was receiving treatment. At the time Lauren had a haemoglobin of 6.4 (half the normal value) and was subsequently given a morphine injection. The following day, the parents discovered that Tom was being used as a control in a brain cooling trial and couldn't be touched as it would "disturb the data". Before her blood transfusion Lauren was asked to consent to a further trial to test Tom's reactions on video. Despite her express refusal, he was entered into the video trial.

The research on Tom finished on 24 June when Lauren and Gordon were told that Tom had no quality of life and would not recover. He was discharged home to die, but Lauren and Gordon were given no means of giving him fluid and were unable to clear his throat, causing additional distress. Tom died eight hours after discharge. Lauren and Gordon returned to hospital to find his possessions in a rubbish sack, some damaged and some missing.

Five months later, in November 2000, Lauren contacted the United Bristol Healthcare Trust (UBHT) to ask what action had been taken to address deficiencies in Tom's care and the consent for his research. She was told no action was planned, that she was to blame for Tom's death and she would not be allowed to "have her say" because of the sensitivity surrounding the ongoing heart surgery inquiry.

Lauren's further quest for explanation and accountability from Hugh Ross, the departing chief executive of the UBHT, was met with an absurd and highly damaging allegation by UBHT to Bristol social services that she was going to murder her children on Christmas Eve, based on alleged telephone comments made to the hospital chaplain. An investigation found no basis for these allegations whatsoever, and Jim Roy, manager of the Child Protection Team, described the manner of the referral as "inaccurate" and "incongruous". But the allegations, though rejected, remain on official record. This has forced Lauren and Gordon to leave Bristol and has been exceedingly traumatic for them.

UBHT's defensiveness towards Lauren may have been exacerbated by the fact that Lauren is a barrister, law lecturer and researcher in child protection issues. She has amassed a great deal of evidence to support her claims of clinical negligence, and breaches of many acts and dozens of Bristol inquiry recommendations. However, in the 27 months since Tom's death, she has not sought to sue but to try to engage a hostile and aggressive management in a constructive but thorough investigation to prevent future tragedies.

After UBHT refused to disclose relevant documentation, Lauren sought help from Mike Evans, head of the investigation and inquiry unit at the department of health, in May 2002. Alas, the confidentiality of this meeting was breached as a DoH official spoke to Leslie Salmon, the general manager of St Michael's hospital, about the existence of the crucial video of Tom's research trial. It was then destroyed.

Evans offered Lauren an "independent" investigation to be overseen by Ross but admitted that the DoH has no power to prevent destruction or falsification of records, or even to ensure they are produced to the department (even though they are the property of the health secretary). In August Lauren issued a pre-action protocol against UBHT in an attempt to prevent the further destruction of evidence, but Ross wrongly told Evans that court proceedings had been instigated. The UBHT continues to withhold records.

As a result Evans suspended his offer of an inquiry and Lauren and Gordon have reluctantly turned to the press for help. As with the heart tragedy before it, it seems the only thing that will persuade UBHT and the DoH to grasp the nettle of unacceptable and unethical practice is media exposure.

M.D.

off your trolley

REEVE & WAY

ROTTEN BOROUGHS

JAIL BAIT

WITH Dame Shirley Porter having ignored an order of the high court to pay the £27m surcharge for gerrymandering in Westminster by 13 September (*Eyes passim*), she now faces an investigation into the whereabouts of her £70 million fortune.

Westminster council has released details of a hitherto private hearing, held in December last year, at which Westminster was granted a freezing order on Dame Shirl's assets to the value of £33m. The high court restrained Porter from "in any way dealing with or diminishing the value of assets held world-wide, whether in her own name or owned beneficially by her either solely or jointly". It warned that should she fail to disclose details of all her assets held world-wide she would "be held in contempt of court and liable to imprisonment".

On 9 January last, Porter complied with the court order, claiming she was only worth £300,000. Her personal fortune had previously been estimated to be as high as £70m. Whether Porter lied about her assets — and therefore is in contempt of court — will be determined shortly when Westminster's lawyers meet with the audit commission's appointed auditor, John Magill, who so far has been tenacious in his pursuit of Porter. The first moves to verify her claim of (relative) poverty will be to begin the hunt to track down her overseas assets and those she transferred to family and friends.

Porter's solicitors, Jeffrey Green Russell, tell the *Eye* she has spent in excess of £1m in legal fees defending her "reputation". Worth every penny!

HIP OPERATION

ROTHER district council in Sussex has ended up looking stupid thanks to Bexhill and Battle's Tory Boy MP, Greg Barker.

In July Bexhill, not formerly noted as the hippest of burghs, hosted a "three-day jazz and rock fest" which was the "brainchild" of Barker, who helped pay for a viability study by consultants. A special stage was constructed outside the De La Warr pavilion, saxophonist Courtney Pine was booked to top the bill, and Bexhill got ready to groove. Barker was confident that over the three days, 12,000 tickets could be sold at £16 each, easily covering estimated costs of £60,000, which he persuaded the Conservative council to underwrite.

Alas the beats of Bexhill failed to turn out in sufficient numbers for the gig to break even. Only 1,253 tickets were sold over the three days and the event actually cost more than £120,000, leaving the council with a loss of £98,000. South East Arts forked out £35,000 (a subsidy of £28 for every ticket sold!) and Rother council raided the town's regeneration budget for another £15,000, thereby reducing the "official" loss to just over £48,000 — but there are still large bills, such as policing, to come in. The final loss to council taxpayers will probably be around £70,000. The pensioners of Bexhill are not murmuring "cool".

RIDDLE OF THE SANDS

JOHN McKINNEY OBE, the former chief executive of Omagh district council who has been under investigation over expenses claims at local enterprise development company Into the West (*Eye* 1060), features in another of Ulster's burgeoning financial scandals.

In 1996 McKinney — now chief executive of the EU special funds programme in Ireland — recommended Omagh council to authorise a loan of £142,000 to the Fintona Regeneration Initiative (FRI) to buy sand for a new equestrian centre. Six years later, the council still hasn't had its money back.

No one knows how much sand was actually supplied. A business calling itself "EuroFocus Enterprises" on one bill head and "Lee's Equestrian" on another, with a Belfast address but a Dublin telephone number, was paid to procure 1360 cubic metres of the stuff. But because the delivery was not monitored and no delivery note was supplied, no one was able to say how many loads actually arrived. The company seems to have disappeared after the transaction. And because FRI didn't have proper documentation, it was unable to claim back around £20,000 in VAT.

As well as being the council's chief exec, McKinney also happened to be secretary of the FRI when he authorised payment of part of the loan a week in advance of the council's approval. He told the council later that the money could be recouped from a lottery grant. But the national lottery charities board says it never pays out grants retrospectively.

After pressure from the district auditor the FRI last year said it would start to repay the money, but has reneged on that promise. The ball is now in the Northern Ireland local government auditor's court. One solution would be to surcharge Omagh's dozy councillors, who seem to let taxpayers' money slip through their fingers like, well, sand.

CHUNDER STORM

DURHAM could soon lose its last cinema, the Robins, one of the few independently owned screens in the north-east. Why? Because the city council gave planning permission to Regent Inns to turn it into an 700-plus capacity Australian theme pub called "Walkabout".

Why did councillors do such a stupid, philistine thing? Because they were looking forward to the opening of a new multiplex cinema as the centrepiece of the city's Walkergate entertainment complex. But as long ago as April 2000 *Eye* 999 revealed that the scheme was in doubt because the market was already saturated with multiplexes; in September that year cinema operators Warner Villages pulled out and still have not been replaced, leaving the grandiose plan dead in the water – or, more precisely, as a temporary car park.

When a report last month in the *Northern Echo* about the threat to the Robins confused the Walkergate fiasco with the Labour council's neighbouring Millennium City fiasco (*Eyes passim*) the council's chief executive Colin Shearsmith shot a letter back about the paper's "major error". Walkergate was a separate "private sector scheme" he said; nothing whatever to do with Millennium City. Nothing to do with it — except that it is to be built mainly on adjacent council land, is intended to subsidise the Millennium scheme and belongs to a company called Durham Heart of the City Ltd. Nineteen per cent of DHoC's shares are owned by Durham city council. Its directors include senior Labour councillor John Bowman, Durham's environmental services chief John Jennings and, er, Colin Shearsmith.

PS: Councillors could have turned down the application for the Aussie boozer on the good planning grounds that the city should retain its only cinema. But that would have meant admitting that the Walkergate multiplex was never going to happen. And having previously approved the pub scheme twice, Cllr Bowman told the planning committee that turning it down would make councillors "look like a bunch of idiots". Nuff said.

DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDERN
EDUCATION & LIBRARIES
Bob Wolfson, MA
Director

Wiltshire C.C. letterhead

POLICE 5

CHIEF CONSTABLES are anxiously wondering which of them could be for the chop as they wait for home secretary David Blunkett to start naming and shaming "underperforming" police divisions, much as he did with schools.

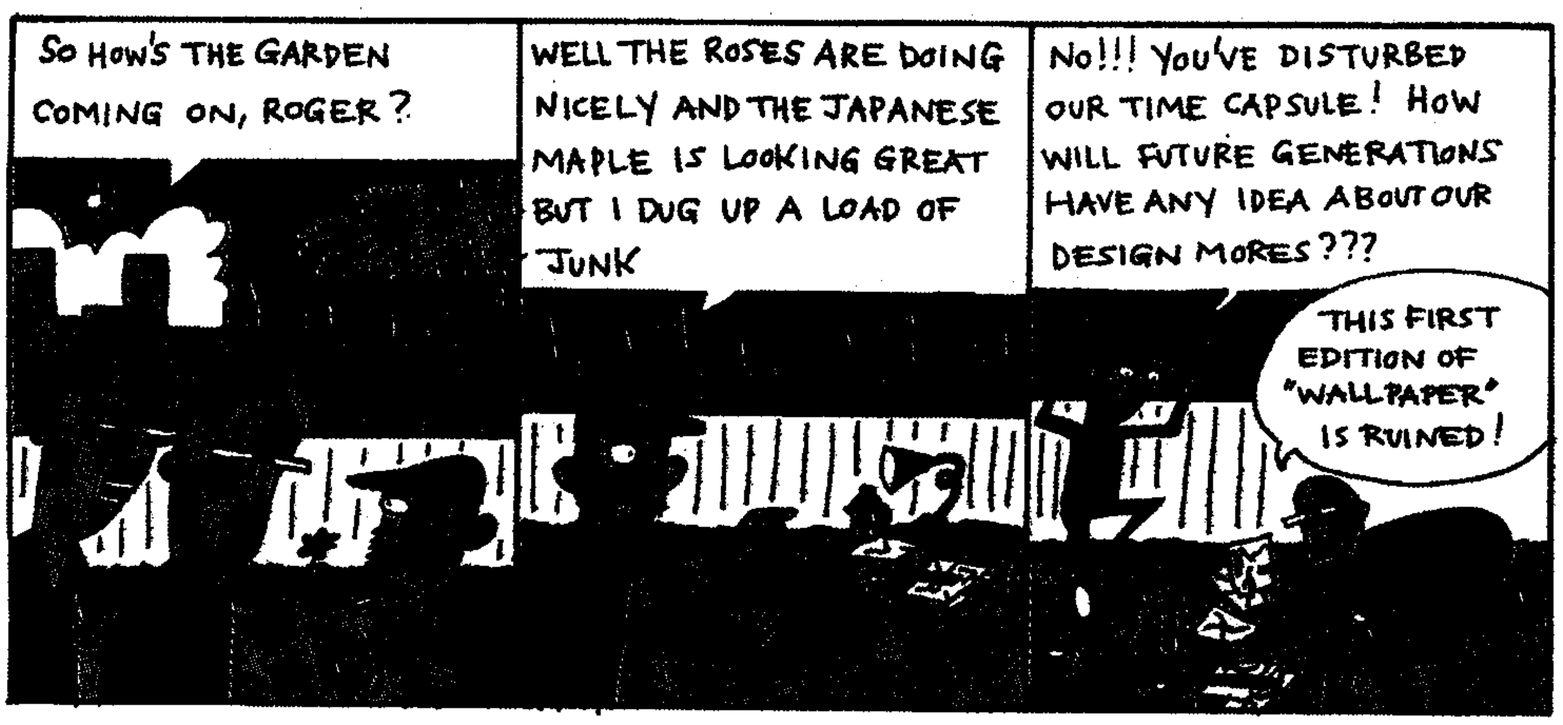
He has changed the role of HM chief inspector of police so that he is now effectively a Chris Woodhead for coppers, who goes out and inspects local divisions (known as basic command units). But in the background is the new police standards unit run by Kevin Bond, the former £298,000 pa Yorkshire Water boss at the centre of the 1998 "fatcats" row, who now has to rub along on £200,000 a year for a four-day week in his new job. Senior Knackers believe Bond is about to swoop on one of the BCUs, take it over, and impose "an improvement plan".

Result: the local chief constable will probably feel compelled to resign and his police authority and local groups involved in the new "crime and disorder partnerships" will have their noses put out of joint because the improvement plan will mean setting aside everything they have put in place.

The underlying problem is that, as with schools, the whole operation tends to judge people by their figures (how many crimes; how many convictions) failing to pay attention to the surrounding social and economic problems which have a huge impact on how those figures work out. The long-term effect will be that any police officer who wants to "do well" will avoid working in the inner city areas — just the places where good cops (and teachers) are most needed.

But by then Blunkett will be foreign secretary, so that's all right!

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON KNIFE & PACKER


SO HOW'S THE GARDEN COMING ON, ROGER?
WELL THE ROSES ARE DOING NICELY AND THE JAPANESE MAPLE IS LOOKING GREAT BUT I DUG UP A LOAD OF JUNK
No!!! YOU'VE DISTURBED OUR TIME CAPSULE! HOW WILL FUTURE GENERATIONS HAVE ANY IDEA ABOUT OUR DESIGN MORES???
THIS FIRST EDITION OF "WALLPAPER" IS RUINED!

NOOKS and CORNERS

DESPITE the pounding Canterbury took in the second world war, and the post-war spirit of modernisation, rather than restoration, which meant its rebuilding was as mediocre and incoherent as it was opportunistic and corrupt, much of the old cathedral city survives, giving pleasure both to tourists and the rest of us.

Indeed, under Mansell Jagger the conservation section of the planning department of Canterbury city council built up a reputation for intelligent conservation, since 1974 consistently and successfully resisting that cynical scourge of authenticity, redevelopment with "façade retention" only. No longer, however.

Two years ago the political decision was taken to reorganise the planning department by creating a development control department and a separate policy & conservation grants section directly under the council's chief executive. As you might expect, the new policy unit is keen for new development to meet purely economic priorities.

The first victim of this change may be the former St Mildred's Tannery in the city centre in Stour Street. This is a complex of industrial buildings and drying sheds along the River Stour dating from the 17th to the 20th centuries.

St Mildred's Tannery

One might have thought the days of *tabula rasa* redevelopment were long over, what with so many fine industrial buildings all over Britain having found new uses. In Canterbury, this irregular, picturesque group of structures overlooking the river cry out for conversion into residential apartments and business premises, thus seizing the opportunity to integrate this formerly inaccessible part of what is a conservation area into the rest of the historic fabric of Canterbury.

However, the council has instead approved a development brief, drawn up with the developer, Bellway Homes, which mostly envisages demolition. Only four grade II listed buildings along Stour Street are to survive, while only the facades of other factory buildings are to be retained, losing the historic structures behind — including a 17th century warehouse.

Only five other English towns retain their tanneries and St Mildred's as it survives is of considerable historic importance. Of course it is a good thing it has closed in that tanneries are anti-social and make disgusting smells; but a resourceful, imaginative developer can make much out of such buildings without destroying their character. Bellway Homes, however, is simply not up to something demanding sensitivity and tact, as the scheme prepared by its in-house architects indicates.

Canterbury city council has got itself into this mess because of the foolish, malevolent decision to break up and emasculate the conservation section. The answer is clear: the council should think again and prepare a more intelligent and conservative development brief.

AND then there is that other cathedral city, Winchester, which was not damaged in the second world war (only by stupid planning decisions since), and where Messrs Sunley Homes want to build a four-storey block of luxury flats in Little Minster Street not far from the High Street.

The proposed block designed by Huw Thomas will have white rendered walls above which there will be steel-framed fenestration for penthouse flats, painted bright blue, with the projecting angular bays covered by a prominent copper roof. Its grade II listed neighbours are merely two- and three-storeys high. Or as the conservation officer reported to the development control committee at its meeting on 20 June: "The architect has clearly come up with a challenging and stimulating contemporary design which would not go unnoticed in the street scene." Indeed, the exciting new roofscape will be visible when standing in front of the west end of the cathedral.

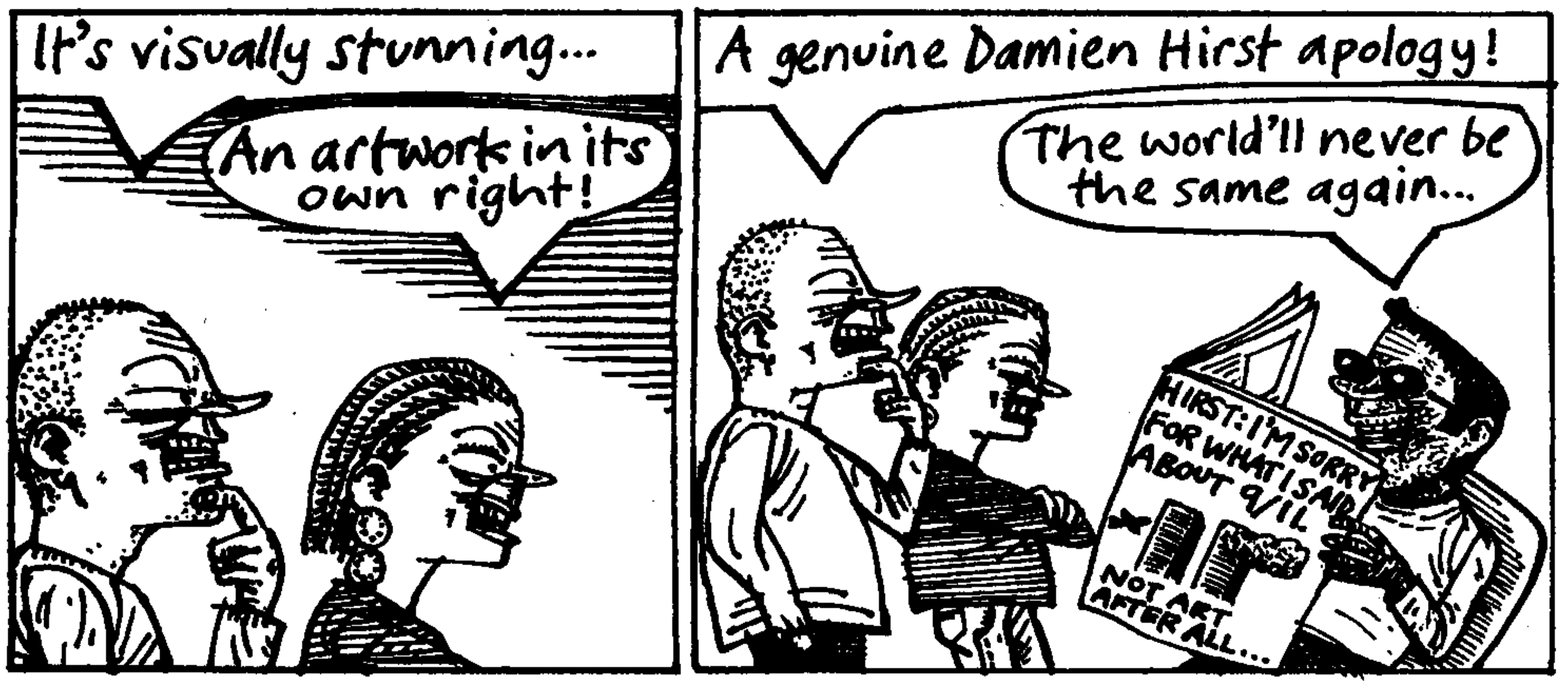
English Heritage is worried about the height of the proposed development; the Georgian Group is concerned about its impact on neighbouring buildings; Winchester City Residents Association strongly objects to its scale; 400 residents signed a petition against it in the space of eight hours; and the Cathedral Fabric Commission for England considers that it "will have a significantly adverse affect on the setting of the Cathedral."

The only local body which pronounced in favour of the block of flats is the Winchester City Trust, whose members, oddly enough, include both its architect and the architect-councillor chairman of the planning committee who presided over the meeting at which the planning application was approved. This caused ructions, so the matter is coming up again for ratification this month. We shall see if Winchester city council really has the city's best interests at heart.

'Piloti'

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS

BY BIRCH


It's visually stunning...
An artwork in its own right!
A genuine Damien Hirst apology!
The world'll never be the same again...
HIRST: I'M SORRY FOR WHAT I SAID ABOUT 9/11
NOT ART AFTER ALL...

I-SPY

Submitted by Keith Bosky, Mark Hewish, Ronald Macaulay. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs. No transparencies.)*

Alsace, France

Farnborough Air Show

Odense, Denmark

Number crunching

£800m

■ total cost of new Wembley Stadium

£80m

■ total cost of bankers' and lawyers' fees

MUSIC & MUSICIANS

THE EYES and ears of the European parliament pry so keenly into every aspect of modern life that there's no obvious reason classical music should be exempt. But there's an element of the surreal in a new directive which is soon to take effect and purports to tell orchestral conductors how to interpret the great works – Beethoven, Brahms et al – of the concert repertoire.

It reads like a bad joke. But in all seriousness the directive insists that, for the sake of auditory wellbeing, orchestras must play quieter. To be specific, they must reduce the overall volume of noise to which players are subjected in the course of their work by an extraordinary 80 percent. Which means, presumably, that sudden climaxes are rationed; Mahler symphonies reduced to two a year; and performances of the 1812 Overture with cannon effects rendered wholly unlawful. Bad news for Classic FM.

It's also unbelievably bad news for anyone involved with music management, who – as if they didn't have enough to observe in the way of non-musical regulation – will now have to calculate the loudness quotient of everything from Albinoni to Zemlinsky and lie sleepless in their beds at the prospect of next season's Wagner nights.

It is, however, good news for the more rebellious and bloody-minded of our orchestras who will find themselves a whole new universe of possibilities for being difficult. The next time the BBC Symphony want to squeeze out their chief conductor as they've just done to the inoffensive Leonard Slatkin (throwing BBC management into a blind panic because there's no obvious replacement who actually wants the job), all they will have to do is complain about his crescendos.

"Loud? Corblimey! It'd put the wind up Evelyn Glennie." You can hear it coming.

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

Letters

Kuwait memories

Sir,

I refer to your article about the TUC and Mr Roger Lyons' attempt to reveal the repression of Iraqi forces during the invasion of Kuwait. True, the story about the babies being thrown out of incubators is a fabrication, but that should not be used as an evidence to give the invading forces a clean record. Horrible things happened during the invasion. My own brother served as a young recruit in Saddam's army in Kuwait and he told me most harrowing stories about torture, rape, theft and other forms of abuse. So one false story should not give this repressive regime a clean record. This story was widely used by the media of Saddam and when I read your article I couldn't help remembering the similarities with Saddam's media. I appeal to you not to be (or appear to be) complacent with the tyrannical regime of Saddam Hussain. Action against this tyranny has long being over due.

Regards,
ALI AL-AMIR,

Acton, London.

A capital guy

Sir,

In reply to Suzanne Kelly's letter:

1) Bush's belief in capital punishment is clearly genuine. This is morally preferable to Bill Clinton's stance as Governor of Arkansas – rubber-stamping execution orders of which he almost certainly privately disapproved, for reasons of personal ambition.

2) If you accept capital punishment, you must accept that innocent people will sometimes be executed – just as if you are not a pacifist you must accept that war almost inevitably involves killing civilians. The guilt or innocence of accused persons should be determined by the courts – not, except in the most exceptional circumstances, by any politician.

3) If believing in capital punishment makes Bush evil, nearly all the most revered statesmen and philosophers of the last two millennia (such as Abraham Lincoln and Samuel Johnson), were evil too.

Yours faithfully,
DAVID WATKINS,

Via email.

Badgering the badger

Sir,

Re. Badgers, Down on the Farm (1063).

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, stewards and parkers (estate managers) were instructed to kill hedgehogs, which were felt to be responsible for maiming deer in various manners. This may seem to us ludicrous, the hedgehog now being known to be a harmless, and even beneficial, inhabitant of the deer-park. But the smugly-scientific of today would do well, I feel, to think of the plight of the badger before laughing at the ignorance of our ancestors. Might the study of history after all teach us something?

Yours sincerely,
KATIE HAWKS,

Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge.

Slade school

Sir,

Re: Slade's Honorary Degree. Jimmus Lea did not play "secondus guitarus" but basso guitarus and violinus.

*Don't you tools know **anything**?*

MARTIN KENNEDY,

Via email.

Swapping roles

Sir,

I read with interest your article World of Spooks (Eye 1063, p5) concerning the report of a Hollywood movie about Irish Olympic swimmer "Nicole Smith, starring Michele Kidman".

It struck me that maybe Hollywood could continue this genre with a new movie about, say, our own beloved bald Olympian swimmer Arnold Goodhew, and perhaps he could be played by that well-known action hero Duncan Schwarzenegger.

Just a suggestion.

Regards,
RUSS TIPPIN,

Newcastle.

Cross words

Sir,

Sorry to have overlooked your Rotten Boroughs item on the appointment of our new director of education (1061), but I spent most of that issue struggling with the particularly obscure crossword. However, obscure though the crossword was, it was clearly more accurate in its compilation than the article inferring our new director's appointment was inefficient or even somehow suspect, because we appointed an internal candidate.

*I am quite sure we did not employ head hunters for vast sums of money to find candidates for our new post. In a backward reference we **did** employ consultants to advise on our senior management teams' new salary ranges and the Labour Group took issue with this process. After all, had we wanted to give inflated wage increases to the senior management teams we might as well have done that ourselves because all East Riding councillors have reaped nothing but criticism for adopting the consultant's report.*

Anyway, I can honestly say that despite our first round of interviews resulting in a non-appointment, we did readvertise successfully for a good shortlist of well qualified and experienced candidates. After an exhaustive three-stage interview process, involving local headteachers, co-chairs of lifelong learning and an appointments panel, we concluded that Jon Mager was the best candidate. Incidentally, though encouraged to apply in the first round of advertisements, Jon Mager preferred not to. We have since, of course, had to undertake another round of expensive advertisements to recruit a replacement for the vacated post of "head of inclusion and resources", but what can a local authority do?

If we did not advertise posts openly and widely we would rightly attract pointed fingers. Anyone has a right to comment on the workings of their local government, but this molehill remains substantially less than a mountain.

Yours sincerely,
COUNCILLOR J. WHITFIELD,

Beverley Minster Ward.

Lookalike

Binalshibh

Dylan

Sir,

Has anyone noticed the similarity between Al Qaeda member Ramzi Binalshibh and Magic Roundabout's Dylan? I always thought it was a very subversive programme.

Yours,
GERARD WHYMAN,

Cambridge.

Scenes You Seldom See

"That's me – I saw the whole thing and can remember all the details"

Lending rights and wrongs

Sir,

Good to see coverage of our PLR Scheme in last week's Eye. But could you add a zero to the £500,000 that your feature has us giving out to the 17,000 authors who don't qualify for the maximum payment of £6,000?

We are due to distribute around £5m (not £500,000) to the 17,000 authors in question. Part of the £5m – around £500,000 – is money that is taken from the more successful authors whose payments are subject to the £6,000 ceiling. That's where the confusion probably crept in.

All best,
JIM PARKER,

Registrar of PLR.

Breaking Windows

Sir,

I would like to add to Alex Cox's sound advice not to upgrade to Microsoft's annual licence renewal and save money. An alternative operating system, Linux, is available for free. Linux is an industrial strength operating system used extensively on the server side of the internet and is available in a desktop windows like version. It has been developed over the years in a similar way to the internet, ie in the public domain with no one owning it. It has many technical advantages over Windows too long (boring) to list but those interested should check it out. Over the years, how many additional teachers and nurses could be paid for by avoiding the Microsoft tax?

If you publish this, please withhold my name because I unfortunately have to rely on Microsoft and don't want to fall out with them just yet.

NAME SUPPLIED,

Via email.

Eye told you so...

Sir,

I know I read about this some time ago in the Eye and yet, imagine my surprise when I saw this on the BBC news website this afternoon:

Revenue sell-off to tax haven firm
By Stefan Armbruster
BBC News Online business reporter

The Inland Revenue has confirmed that it sold its estate of more than 600 buildings to a company based in a tax haven, and admits it wrongly announced the properties were sold to a UK firm.

The Inland Revenue confirmed its mistake following an investigation by BBC News Online.

As a subscription reader, I think I should apply to the BBC as an Online business reporter, what with all the back editions I've got to pour through, I could give old "Stefan Armbruster" a run for his money!

Regards,
NOEL "ROGER COOK" HENNESSY,

Via email.

It Really Is Naipauling...

Sir,

If your correspondent (Books & Bookmen, 1063) had troubled to read a few more cuttings, he would have known that V.S. Naipaul will not have approval over the text of my biography of him. I would – obviously – not have accepted a condition of this kind, nor was it sought.

"It Really Is Naipauling" will do as a headline.

PATRICK FRENCH,
London WC2.

Board stiff?

Sir,

Re: Cartoon on Gnome page (1063). The mallet-wielding American officer clearly works for military intelligence. He has set the chess board up the wrong way round. Remember, appropriately, "white on the right" and you won't go far wrong.

Yours pedantically,
PAUL McINTYRE,
Via email.

Lara Lara laughs

Sir,

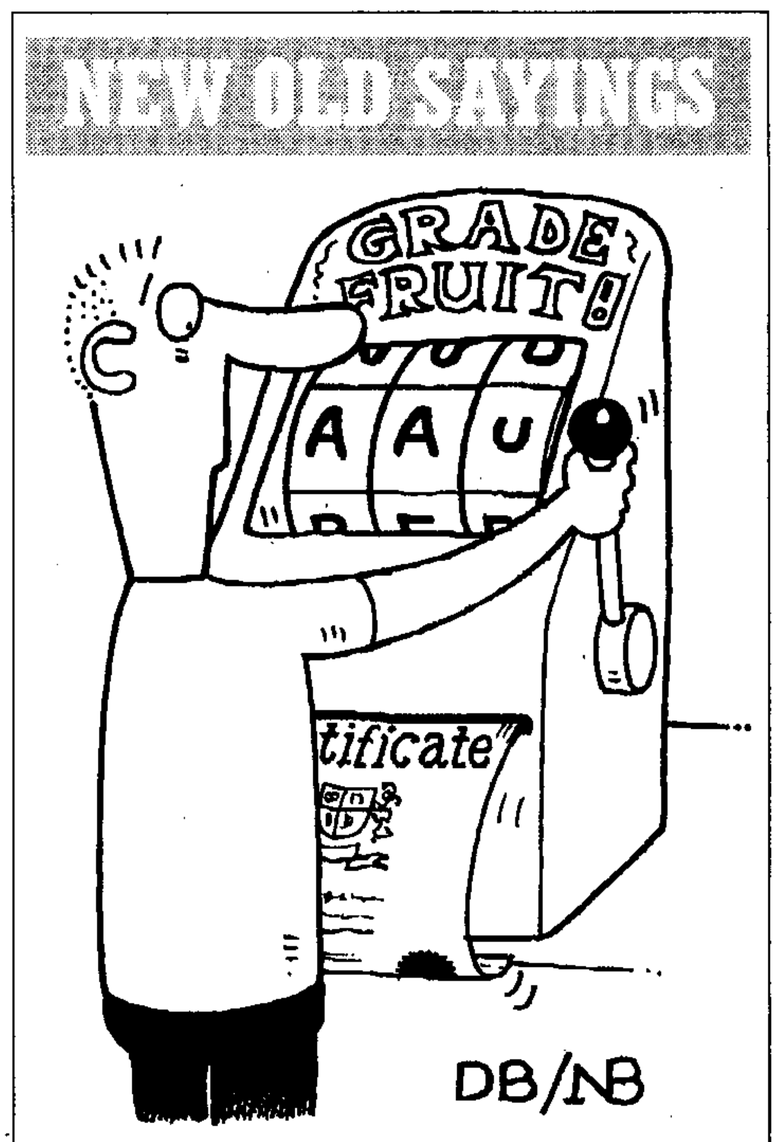
Re: Warballs, 1063. It's comforting to know your slim fortnightly is keeping with tradition and slipping into condescending High Table snottiness about people who actually work for a living.

"Warballs, One Year On" (20 September) quotes Lara Paterson in CA magazine. A former professional acquaintance of mine, Lara is one of Scotland's most respected legal recruitment consultants, a job which is infinitely more stressful, demanding and results-oriented than swanning around between media lunches and making fun of people at the BBC.

It's interesting to note that the quote originated from CA magazine. Given that thousands of Enron employees have lost their life savings investing in company stock inflated by their professional brethren's duff audits, our accountants really should be keeping their heads down.

You may not have understood what Lara was getting at, so I'll interpret for you. As a result of 9/11, corporate work in Scotland is so thin on the ground that experienced, highly-paid lawyers are having to pit themselves against younger, cheaper practitioners to try and find work in one of the most expensive cities and competitive marketplaces in the world. Lots of hideous expense is incurred, they may have to take their kids out of school and if they fail they'll never get another job. Their careers may be over in their early 40s. But then again, sympathy for them demands an understanding that even corporate lawyers have the fundamental human right of being able to make a living.

Yours faithfully,
MARTIN KELLY,
Via email.



There are lies, exam lies and statistics

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

Interviewer: *What has separated the sides [Manchester United and Tottenham]?*

Ron Atkinson: *Not much... United have done most of the running, and they've almost forced the big issue on them.*

ITV
(Rob Kitson)

"The television watchdog upheld 69 complaints about the use of sexual innuendo in the Carling Black Label advert."

BBC Online
(Michael Thompson)

"... and the Bulgarians are doing all they can here to waste every last inch of time in this game."

COLIN MACNAMARA, Radio 5 Live
(Mark Hickton)

"You could earn £50k a year as a plumber, but you could break your leg and then you would have nothing to fall back on."

Radio 4
(Colin R. Dunn)

"When I'm out on the pitch it's the closest thing to being back in a dressing room."

STEVE BAINES (football referee), Observer
(Ken Green)

HOM SAP

AUSTIN

Letter from **Poland**

from Our Own Correspondent

SALVATION, our politicians are always telling us, is at hand. When we join the European Union – we're in the vanguard of those former eastern bloc countries hoping to qualify for membership – all our troubles will be over. Prosperity will be guaranteed.

It was something of a disappointment, then, when our favourite son, Pope John Paul II, came to Krakow earlier this month and warned instead of the dangers of global capitalism, calling for solidarity with those Poles hit hardest by more than a decade of reform and liberalisation.

Such issues are of less concern to our apparently leftist SLD government, headed by former communist party hack Leszek Miller. But labels like "social democrat" and "conservative" mean something different in Poland where, with the exception of the odd demagogue or proto-fascist, we can have any kind of politics – so long as they subscribe to right-wing neo-liberal values and are ready to bend over backwards to meet EU entry requirements.

It is a sign of the times that the SLD, self-styled champion of the working man, is pushing a plan to increase employment by... making it easier to sack workers. For the real ideology under which we now labour is TKM – *Teraz kurwa my*, "Now it's our fucking turn" – which describes the large class of politico-criminal opportunists who use their contacts with whoever is in power to plunder the country.

Miller shot to power in elections last year on the strength of popular hostility towards the notorious corruption of the nominally rightist AWS government. But his cronies have proved equally adept at doling out jobs to the boys. The changeover of power was followed by purges at many levels of state administration and also on the boards of the many companies in which – in the wake of privatisation – the treasury still holds shares. An SLD supporter, for example, is now back as deputy head of the internal security agency, from which he had been sacked by the AWS.

Such medieval style patronage and influence peddling is hardly good for the image of the civil service of one of Europe's so-called emerging nations. But it might matter less if the economy were in less of a mess. Unemployment has risen to around 17 percent, while the economy is expected to grow at just 1.4 percent this year. Curiously, the picture on inflation is much better, with prices actually falling. It's a coincidence, no doubt, that low inflation is one of the key requirements for membership of the eurozone while low unemployment is not.

But our leaders insist EU membership is the Holy Grail. They point to once-impoverished places like Ireland and insist we too can enjoy similar success. Indeed, so busy are they slavering over the benefits that will accrue, they seem to forget that not only did Dublin's good fortune follow 25 years of painful economic adjustment, but also that the boom there is already petering out.

Perhaps our politicians have already learnt some of the lessons of our richer neighbours; once we are finally in the EU, they can look forward to blaming any problem we might have on the evils of a faceless Brussels, whilst also in turn allowing it finally to finish off our tediously noisy collection of small farmers.

It is a sign of the TKM tendency's success that we now barely blink at the constant round of scandals, state asset give-aways and botched reforms. At least the foreign investors have the stability and the cheap labour they so badly want. And with them, our politicians and those behind them lining their pockets all happy, who are we to complain?

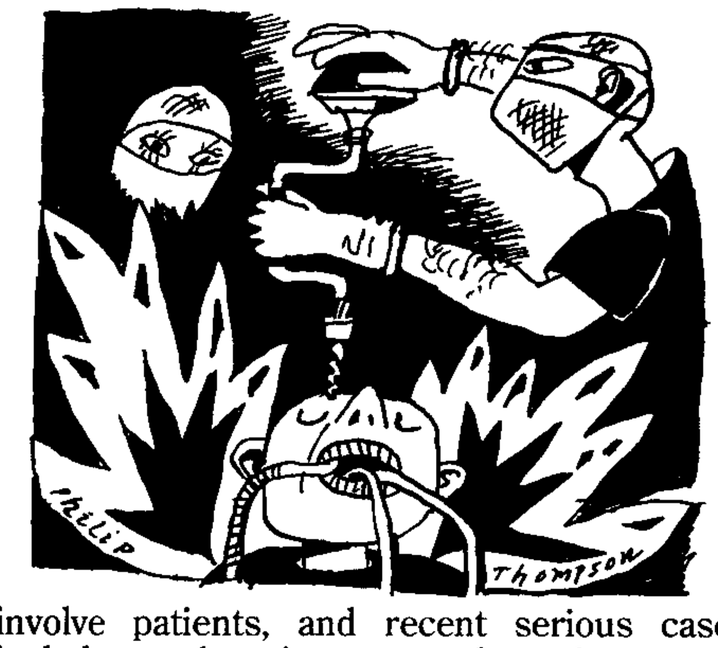
FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

● "When the doctor first told me that I'd caught fire during the operation, but that he'd put it out with a couple of buckets of water, I thought he was joking, and went back to sleep," Robert Hogg told reporters from his bed in Middlemore Hospital, New Zealand. "But when a plastic surgeon came to examine me, I realised they were serious. That's when I discovered that, as well as having had my appendix out, I'd sustained first and second-degree burns to my abdomen and groin."

Janet Cohen, manager of surgical operating services at the hospital, emphasised that "patient fires are extremely rare, and this is the first one we've had in years. In this case, skin-cleaning solution sprayed onto Mr Hogg's abdomen was ignited by heat from the diathermy machine, which uses electrical current to cut or cauterise skin. The fluid burned with a clear flame, so medical staff did not notice the fire on his groin until the doctor's gloves began to melt onto Mr Hogg's skin."

Later, a spokesman explained that patient fires have been documented all around the world. "This is common. Several hundred fires break out in operating theatres each year, most of which cause no great harm to patient or staff. But there are a few dozen each year that directly



involve patients, and recent serious cases include: an American man whose face, neck, and shoulders caught fire while doctors were drilling a hole into his skull; a Welsh cancer patient who suffered injuries to his penis from a small flash fire as surgeons attempted to remove his stomach; an Italian man who died after surgeons accidentally set fire to a breathing tube in his throat with a laser they were using to remove an eye; and a Danish man whose surgical spirit-soaked buttocks were set alight by a spark from an electric knife during an operation to remove a mole up his rectum." *(The New Zealand Herald, 21/8/02. Spotter: Mike Graham)*

—●—

● *"Découverte de nains de jardin. Pas moins de 112 nains de jardin volés ont été découverts hier matin sur la plage de l'étang de Tamniès en Dordogne. Les personnes victimes de vols peuvent envoyer à Sarlat une photo de leur nain disparu pour identification et restitution."*

("Discovery of Garden Gnomes. No fewer than 112 stolen garden gnomes were discovered yesterday morning beside a pond at Tamniès in the Dordogne. Victims of the thefts can send a photo of their stolen gnome to Sarlat, to enable it to be identified and returned to them.") (La Voix du Nord [Lille], 21/8/02. Spotter: Richard Seymour)

—●—

● "As far as I am concerned, the issue is now closed," Datuk Paduka Abdul Kadir Sheikh Fadzir told a press conference in the Ministry of Tourism in Kuala Lumpur, "but I stand by what I said last month. I estimate that ten per cent of cab drivers in this city cheat their customers, and they are communists, and traitors to our country. Which is why, if I can get the legislation through Parliament, I propose to have them lined up against a wall and shot."

Fadzir, Malaysia's Minister for Tourism, had called the press conference to defend remarks he made in August, calling for the execution of many of his country's 28,000 taxi drivers. "The government has spent a lot of money and put in a lot of effort to attract tourists, yet many cabbies are rude to visitors, and try to cheat them. I myself have received several letters of complaint about this. Such bad behaviour is giving this country a bad name, and something must be done. And it is my firm belief that putting a few drivers up against the wall and shooting them, as an example to others, is just the kind of treatment they deserve. It will encourage the remaining drivers to treat tourists with more respect, and not overcharge them, so soon there will no longer be a problem."

However, members of the taxi drivers' union have voiced their concerns about the minister's proposed legislation. "It was not fair for him to say those things about us, and to want to kill us," cabbie Muhammad Jamal told reporters. "Most of us have a hard life, and are just trying to make a bit extra to feed our families. We don't need shooting, we need higher fares." *(The Straits Times, 11/9/02 and AP, 27/8/02. Spotter: Clive Ewing)*

News In Brief

BOSS OF TV CHANNEL NOBODY WATCHES MOVES TO ANOTHER CHANNEL NOBODY WATCHES

A WOMAN in the media has changed jobs. *(Reuters)*

BRITAIN ROCKED BY HUGE HEADLINE

PEOPLE in the UK were last night still in shock after being hit by a series of huge newspaper headlines carrying news of a relatively small, localised earth tremor.

Said one onlooker, "I picked up the newspaper, and there was this huge, earth-shattering headline which left me literally quaking in my boots – it was just like that film when all those houses disappear and thousands of people, get killed, except it wasn't at all really." *(A.P.)*

apparently

BY MIKE BARFIELD

UTTER FANTASY FOOTBALL TEAM FORMATIONS

2-4-6-8	1-2-1-2-1-2	1-4-7-1
TOM ROBINSON	ROADIES	WARY HOUSEHOLDERS
1-3-5-7-11	5-4-3-2-1	6-6-6
MATHS TEACHERS	JEFF TRACY	SATAN

Nature Notes

With 'Old Cottager'
(Matthew Parris of the Times)

No. 94 'Clapham Common'

Now's the time of year I like to go out for a stiff walk on the common. It's surprising what you can find in the bushes and amazing what comes out at night!

"Cooeee!" I hear the distinctive cry of the Bigpecker *(cont'd. p. 94)*

ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev. A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

My fellow parishioners!

And a warm thanks to all those who have congratulated me on my rousing sermon last Sunday in which I spelled out the need to join Rev. Dubya Bush of the Church of Latter-Day Morons in his campaign to rid the world of Evil.

Before I started, I gave out a special "Fact Sheet" to the congregation and they had a good five minutes to read 50 pages proving that the Devil is alive and well and living in Iraq.

And once I began to speak, I knew that you were all on my side. I spoke from the heart, as I always do. And, hey, it got across didn't it?

Even the Doubting Thomases amongst you (I'm not going to name names, but Mr Dalyell, Mr Marshall-Andrews, Mr Galloway and a great many others will know who I'm talking about), were converted by the force of my arguments.

More than once I have been tempted to say "Ye of little faith", but it doesn't help, does it, to remind people how weak and vacillating they are in the support they give?

So, I'm not going to single out Mr Cook and Mrs Short as members of the PCC who should know better than to go around spreading doubts and talking about their consciences, as if anyone cared.

So, let us all move on united in our determination to fight the good fight.

I have even written a special chorus for our evening service next Sunday:

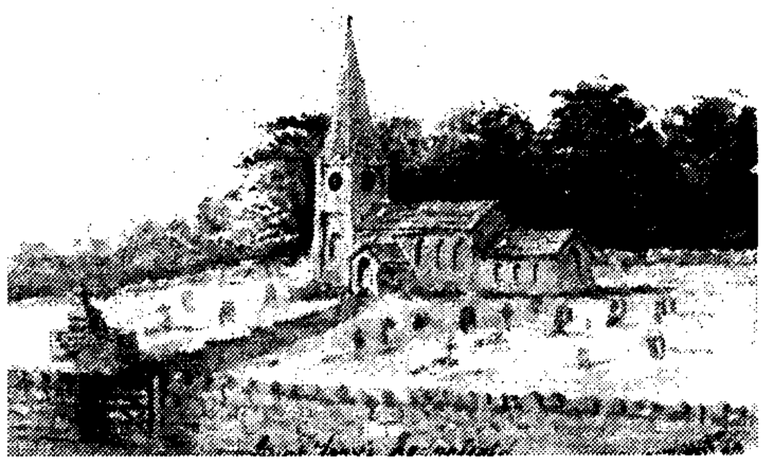
Fight the good fight
Because we are right.
We've got the strength
And we've got the might.
(Words and music Rev. A.R.P. Blair)

Yours in arms

Tony

Ecumenical Round-Up

We are sorry to have to report that Mr Kennedy, the Minister of the United Liberal Democrat Church, has made a number of unhelpful remarks at their recent AGM. If you remember, the idea was that our two churches would work together with Mr Kennedy doing everything I said. Unfortunately, Mr Kennedy has proved to be a fair-weather friend. But I do not wish to cast aspersions about Mr Kennedy's drinking habits. I would only add that it must be difficult to run a church when one is "the worse for wear" a lot of the time. T.B.



NON-EVENTS

● I shall not be commenting on the efforts of a small minority of parishioners (est. 478,953) who marched through the vicarage garden last Sunday making a so-called protest about the countryside. There are more important things for your vicar to be doing.

● I shall not be commenting either on the tiny number of parishioners (est. 217,406) who marched through my garden again this Sunday making another protest about the Rev. Dubya Bush. I am a very busy man! T.B.

Parish Postbag

Dear Vicar,

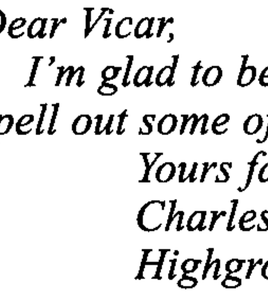
I'm glad to be given this opportunity to spell out some of my thoughts on

Yours faithfully,
Charles Windsor,
Highgrove Estate.

The Editor reserves the right to cut all letters, especially those written in green ink.

Advertisement

STILL AVAILABLE
HANDY MANDY
Your Local Mr Fix-It
"I want to be stretched"



Any job considered –
Spinning – Weaving –
Ducking – Diving –
Going to Parties, etc.

Says Mandy:
"I'm a fighter, not a quitter"
"I'm a plumber, not a fitter"

MEMBER OF THE INSTITUTE OF SPIN DOCTORS

A Thank-You Message From Rev. Dubya Bush, Church of the Latter-Day Morons

Greetings to my good friend and ally Rev. Timmy Bloom and his lovely wife Shirlene. I would like to thank him once again for his steadfast support in our fight against Mr Badman Hussein, the Thief of Baghdad – unlike Pastor Schröder of Germanland who has shown himself to be in league with Satan. My advice to Pastor Schröder is to watch his back. Because Germanland could be next on my list when the boys ride into town and start shooting up rough. Yessir.

Greetings in the Lord
Dubya Bush (Rev.)

In Next Week's Parish Newsletter

THE BLACKPOOL OUTING

There will be a full account of our outing in our next issue.

All the news about what a great success it was will be there and there will also be a copy of the Vicar's Speech, which was so good that he got a standing ovation. DON'T MISS IT (or Mr Campbell will come round to see you because he knows where you live.)

To Remember In Your Prayers

● Mrs Estelle Morris, Chair of the Board of Governors, St Albion's Parish School, who has interfered with the sixth form results. Let us pray that Mrs Morris is not compelled to resign and seek alternative employment after messing up so spectacularly and ruining the lives of so many of our young people.

● Sir William Stubbs, who was in charge of the sixth form exams and who made the appalling mistake of doing what Mrs Morris told him. T.B.

The Secret DIARY OF JOHN MAJOR aged 59½

Saturday morning

I am not inconsiderably incandescent with fury. I read in the Times that Mrs Currie had a passionate 4-year affair with me when I was Chief Whip. How dare she go round telling newspapers a load of truth, after we had agreed that I had drawn a line under this unfortunate event? There is only one word to describe Mrs Currie and that is BASTARD.

In fact, I have got out my old Bastard Book (which I thought I would never have to use again) and I have written her name in enormous capital letters with my special NatWest red biro.

In my judgement, her behaviour has been in no small measure disgraceful and I was quite right not to mention her in my memoirs, not even in the index. This demonstrated convincingly that she was a bastard, which of course she is.

This newspaper revelation has had a very unfortunate effect on my wife Norman. I found her in tears at the breakfast table, the Times spread out over the bowl of Golden Grahams.

"Don't cry, Norman," I said. "It was all a long time ago and I told you I had drawn a line under Mrs Currie."

"I am not crying," Norman said, wiping the tears from her eyes with her free NatWest napkin. "It is just the funniest thing I have read for years."

Clearly shock and sadness over Mrs Currie's disloyalty have turned her mind.

"It says here you were a sexual athlete, John," she said, holding her sides and starting to cry again.

Saturday afternoon

I was in no small measure even more not inconsiderably incandescent to be visited by my brother Terry who came round with a curry and a silly smile on his face.

"I thought you might enjoy this, John," he said. "It is hot and spicy!"

"I have no idea what you are talking about," I replied, as I shut the door in his face.

"Ha ha ha, John," he continued in a considerably unamusing way, shouting through the letter-box. "Remember Mrs Kierens? And how you used to nip round there for tea and crumpets after school? You always were one for the ladies. It's true what they say. It's the boring quiet ones with the glasses who are at it like rabbits all the time."

So saying, he drove off in his white van, leaving an obscene gnome on the lawn holding something that was clearly not a fishing rod.

I have immediately inserted Terry's name in my book under BB, standing for Bastard Brothers.

Sunday

The phone has not inconsiderably stopped ringing. Oh yes.

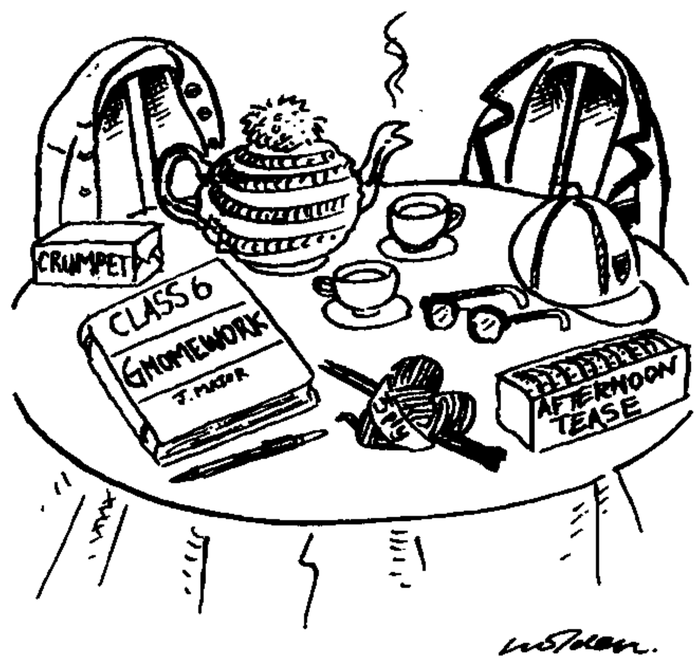
Mr Yeo was the first, followed by Mr Norris, Mr Hartley Booth, Mr Spring, Mr Hughes, Mr Richards, Mr Merchant, Mr Ashby and various other Conservative MPs who I sadly had to let go, due to their moral failings.

All of them were in tears, just like Norman. "Ha ha ha," said Mr Yeo. "We are so sorry that it had to come out now rather than at the time when you would have lost your job and we would have had Michael Heseltine instead of you, which would have been..."

"I am sorry – I am drawing a line under this conversation," I said, replacing the receiver.

Monday morning

There are no words to describe the level of my incandescence. Just when I was opening my ringbinder from Rymans to familiarise myself with my speech to the Utah Chamber of Commerce on the theme of "Probity in Public Office", the doorbell rang and who should be there but my old cook from Number 10.



"I am the one who you told to make lots of money by suing the newspapers," said Mrs Latimer. "So I have made you something very appropriate for your supper."

"It is most kind," I said.

"No, it isn't," she said. "It's Spotted Dick." Then she broke down in tears, falling about and gasping for breath, saying "Ha ha ha ha".

Monday afternoon

The last person I expected to call me has just done so.

"Guess what colour knickers I am wearing?" I knew at once it was Mrs Currie. "Grey," I said, it being the only colour I could think of.

"Wrong," she said. "I am not wearing any knickers at all!"

"I have no longer any interest in such matters," I told her in my stern, statesmanlike voice which I used at Maastricht. "I have drawn a line under your underwear many years ago."

"I am so sorry, John," she said. "I did not do it for the money – not entirely, anyway. And it makes you look a more rounded, complex and attractive figure in the eyes of history."

"I am deeply ashamed of this event and I have drawn a line under the line I drew before," I told her.

"But why didn't you ever mention me in your book?" she asked.

"I **have** put you in my book," I said. "You are in my Bastard Book. Oh yes. In capital letters with a whole page to yourself."

TV HIGHLIGHTS

The Barrymore Interview

HE TELLS GMTV's top breakfast reporter **Fiona Phillups** about the tragic events that led to the loss of his career.

In particular, he denies claims by his wife that he knows how to lie. "I have never been able to lie," he tells Fiona, "and for her to say I am a very good liar who likes lying is a lie. And that is the truth.

"Excuse me – I must go and have a swim."

INDIA

DELHI without hotels. Try en famille at Tikli Bottom-- airport 45 minutes. Farming, fresh air, walks and hills.

Travel guide

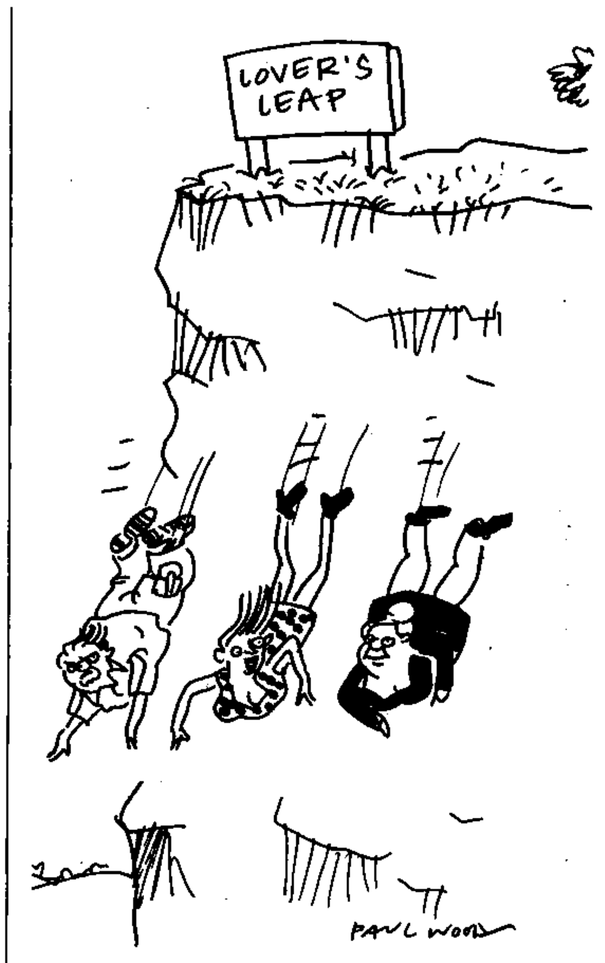
Film of the Week

C4, 7pm

"Un Homme et Deux Femmes"

CLASSIC French film grise about a ménage à trois that turns sour. Starring Jean Majeur, Norma Majeur and femme fatale Salmonella Curé. Contains the classic scene where Jean carefully removes his trousers and puts them in the trouser press (Le Courbet) before making passionate love to Salmonella, using a strawberry and a copy of the Maastricht Treaty.

Eye rating: ☺☺☺☺☺



"Are you alright there, Mum?"

DOES SADDAM POSSESS A MOUSTACHE?

by Our Defence Staff
Brig. John Trumper-Smythe

THE DOSSIER released last week by Tony Blair contains conclusive evidence that Saddam Hussein has the capacity to grow a moustache within 48 hours.

In fact he may already have one.

Intelligence reports from deep inside Iraq suggest that the Iraqi Moustache Project (codenamed SADMOUST) is already highly advanced.

Details of the project could not be included in the dossier in case they compromised valuable intelligence sources (poss. G. Bush).

Cat and Moustache

Saddam has a long history of playing "cat and mouse" games with UN Moustache Inspectors. Sometimes they are allowed into the Presidential Palace – at other times they are told that it is closed "for repairs".

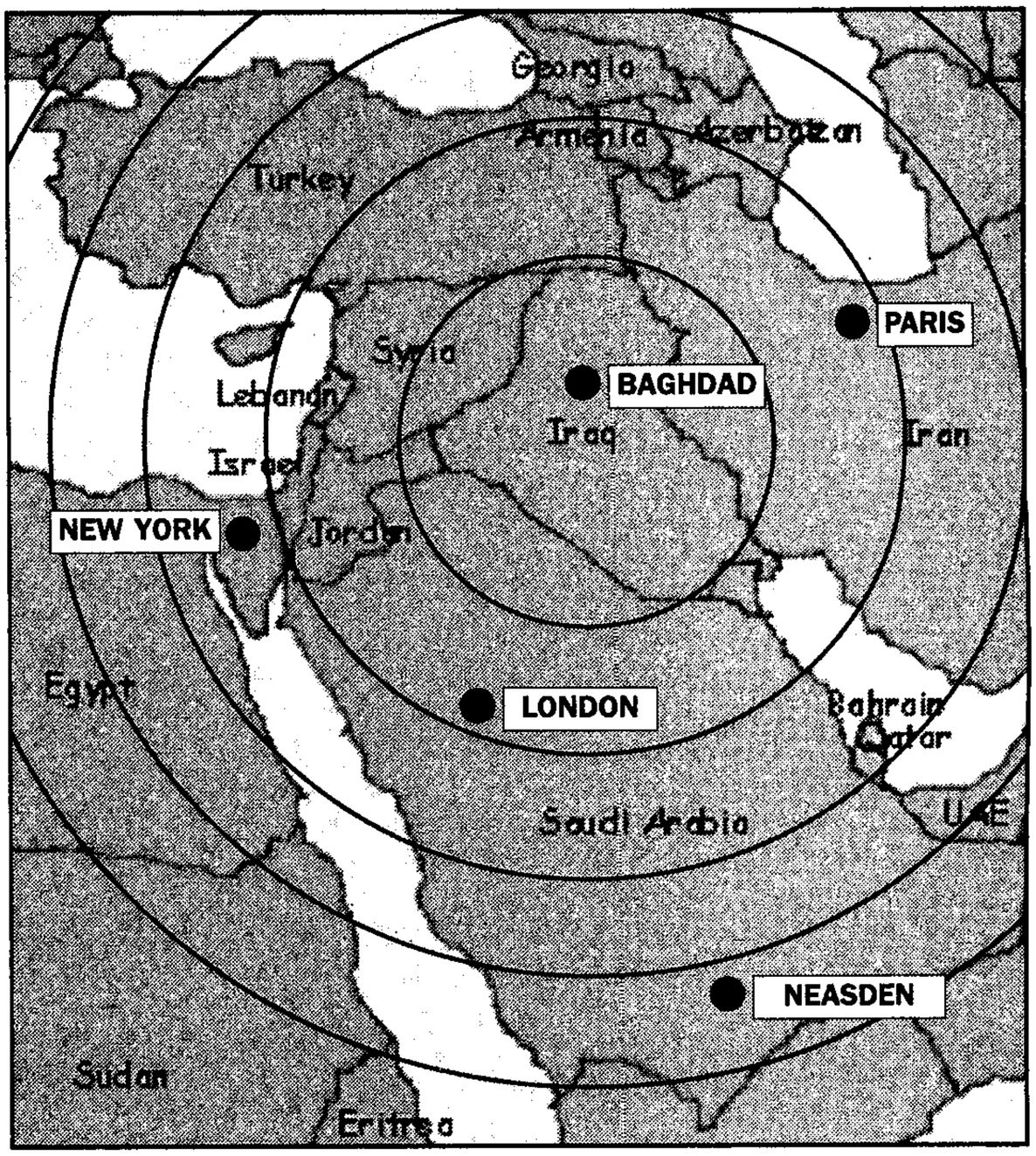
Said one former inspector: "Saddam cannot be trusted. He could easily have a moustache by now. But we would not necessarily know."

● That moustache dossier in full 2-94

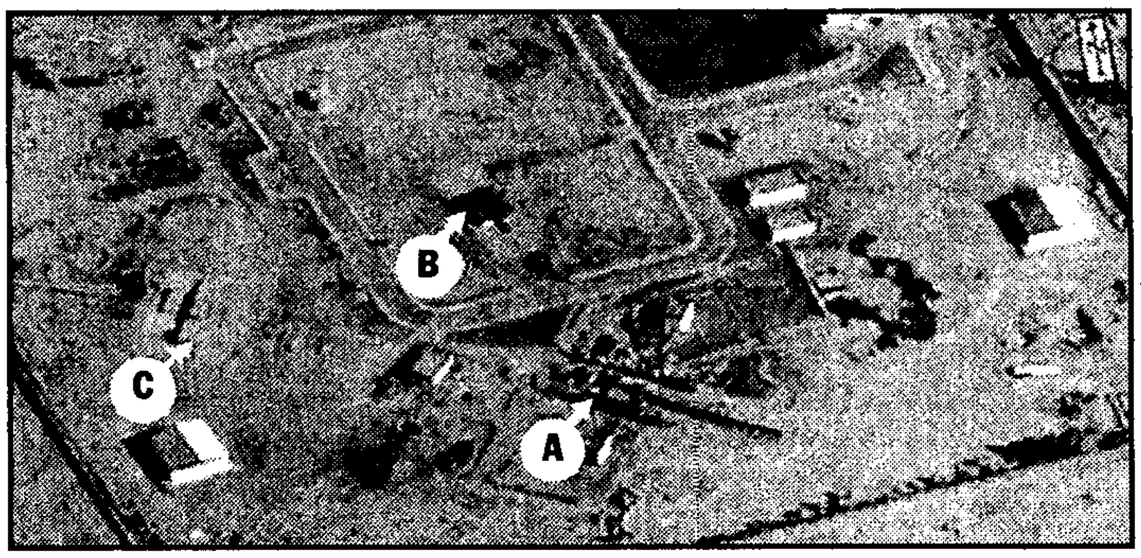
The Black and White House

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE BLAIR DOSSIER

No. 94 Range of Saddam's Ballistic Missiles



No. 95 The Al Fayed Shufti-Bastad Liquid Nuclear Anthrax Facility in Tariqali



(A) *Toilet Block* **(B) *Cricket Pavillon*** **(C) *Pirate Treasure***

(That's enough Dossier. Ed.)

POLLY FILLER ON THE IRAQ CRISIS

THE OTHER day my toddler Charlie came up to me and said, "Is Saddam Hussein trying to kill me, Mummy?"

I wept and hugged him tightly because somehow the innocent words of a child had brought home the reality of the terrible situation in a way that no politician ever could.

As I watched Charlie's little face, full of hope and optimism (and the remains of some toothpaste round his mouth!), I could only say "Shh, darling! Not in front of the Iraqi au-pair." (Lovely girl – doesn't go out much at the moment!)

BUT HOW is a child to understand the machinations of a world full of men with guns?

Charlie is a very bright three-year-old with exceptionally good vocabulary and reasoning skills (93% in Sats, Level 2b!), but even he found it hard to comprehend.

And he couldn't get any answers from his useless father stuck in front of his new plasma screen (paid for by guess who?), watching Live Kangaroo-Throwing from Digger's Bum Creek on Sky's Extremely Desperate Channel.

Anyway, being a man, Simon would have had no insight into the testosterone-fuelled madness that is international politics.

And suddenly I saw it all clearly through Charlie's eyes – the solution to the problem.

"Let's go to McDonald's and forget all about it," I said. The cloud lifted, his little world was restored and Ishbaq took him down the street for an aptly-named Happy Meal. Makes you think, doesn't it?

The Grauniad

The Left To March

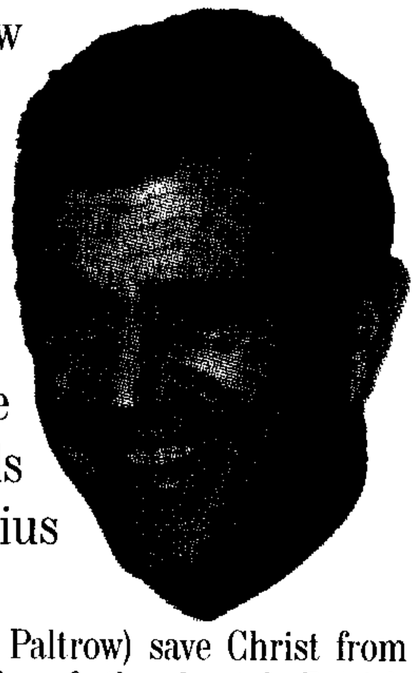
WHEN thousands of people march through the streets of London to protest about Government policy, Mr Blair must sit up and take notice, unless of course they are wearing wellingtons, in which case they are probably "in-bred lunatics and Hooray Henrys who should be ignored or possibly locked up". (©Rod Liddle, *Grauniad* 2002.)

No, this latest march with its solid citizens carrying sensible banners, such as "Bush Is Hitler" and "Support Saddam Now", represents a political sea-change of *(p. 94)*

VARIETY

MEL SELLS GOD SQUAD PIC FLICK

Los Angeles, Tuesday



Mel Gibson is to produce a new film of the life of Christ called "Passionheart", which tells the story of plucky Jesus H. Christ (Mel Gibson), the Australian-American freedom fighter who takes on the might of the British Empire and is brutally murdered at the hands of snobby colonial governor Sir Pontius Pilate (Charles Dance).

Christ assembles a hand-picked team of rebels, including Matthew (Matt Damon), Mark (Ben Affleck), wise-cracking Luke (Luke Perry) and evangelist John (Denzel Washington), but is betrayed by the weasly English psychopath Judas (Jude Law).

Can the love of Mary Magdalen (Gwyneth Paltrow) save Christ from the hands of the brutal British soldiers, commanded by Centurion Maximumus Anglicus Bastardus (Tom Wilkinson)?

In an explosive finale, Christ is martyred but the spirit of christianity triumphs and the evil British empire collapses for ever.

COUGH GETS WORSE

by Our Political Staff **Peter O'Bore**

TORY LEADER Iain Duncan Cough came under attack last night by critics of his controversial "I'm Backing Blair" campaign.

"Cough's tactics of supporting the Prime Minister have gone too far," said one senior Tory. "We thought that Cough was bad before the Iraq debate but now he's got much worse.

"It is one thing to support Mr Blair but quite another to agree with him in Parliament. This is the sort of muddled thinking that drives voters into the arms of the Conservatives. I'm sorry – can I say that again?"

Book Drama

Last night Mr Cough attended the launch of a new book of Conservative thinking provocatively entitled *There IS Such A Person As Iain Duncan Cough.*

Sources close to Mr Cough claimed that the book was in no way intended as a rebuff to Mrs Thatcher, who once famously declared: "Who is this awful new man they've got in?"

"What Iain is trying to do," said top Tory Oliver Letwin, "is to tell the grass roots that we've moved on since the days of Mrs Thatcher and her ridiculous claim that there is no such thing as the Conservative Party."

TUBE DRIVERS BRING CHAOS TO LONDON

by Our Transport Staff **Lester Square**

ANGRY commuters trying to get to work this morning were confronted by scenes of massive disruption as tube drivers worked normally.

Trains were mostly late or cancelled and the few that ran on time were hopelessly overcrowded.

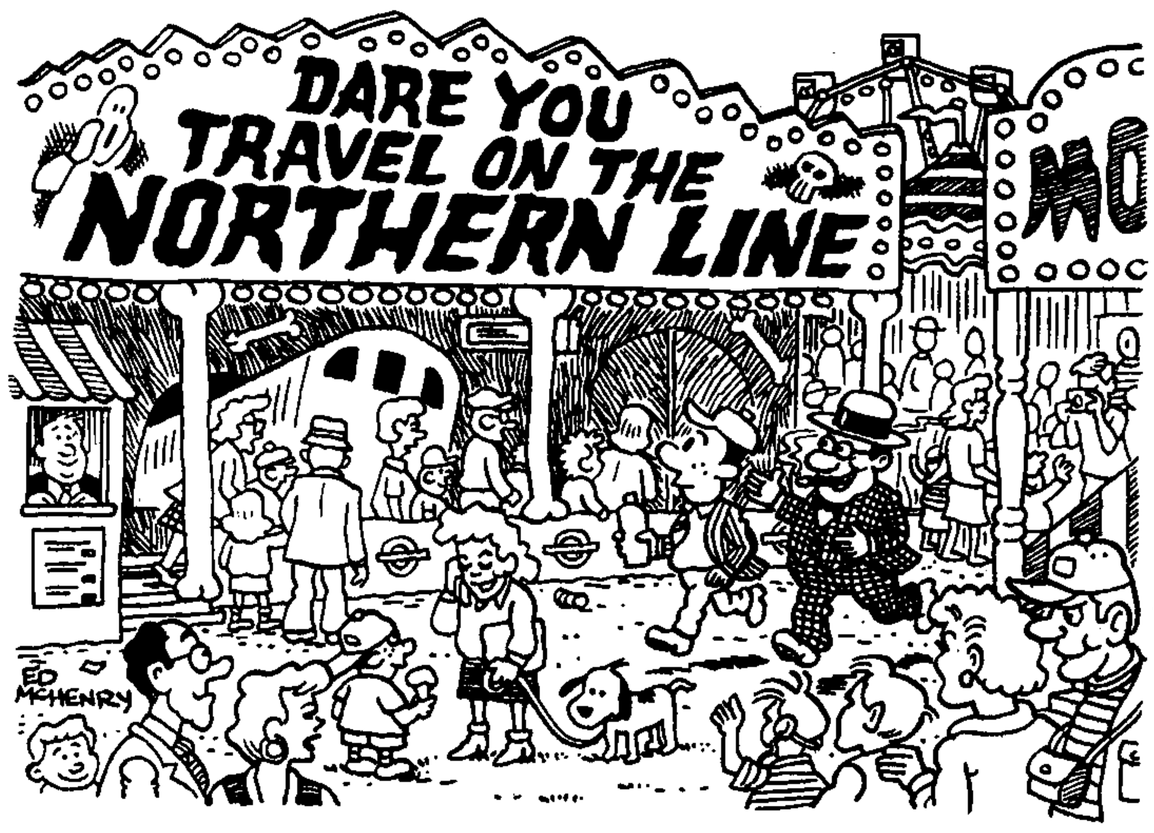
One commuter said, "It's a disgrace. They have a responsibility to the public and they should have stayed on strike, allowing travellers to get to work on time by foot."

Said a furious nurse, "I was late for my ward duties this morning simply because these greedy tube drivers went to work for a day."

Northern Lie-in

However, the Mayor of London, Mr Kensington Livingwell, told reporters, "I think public transport is working very well, but I am in Brighton."

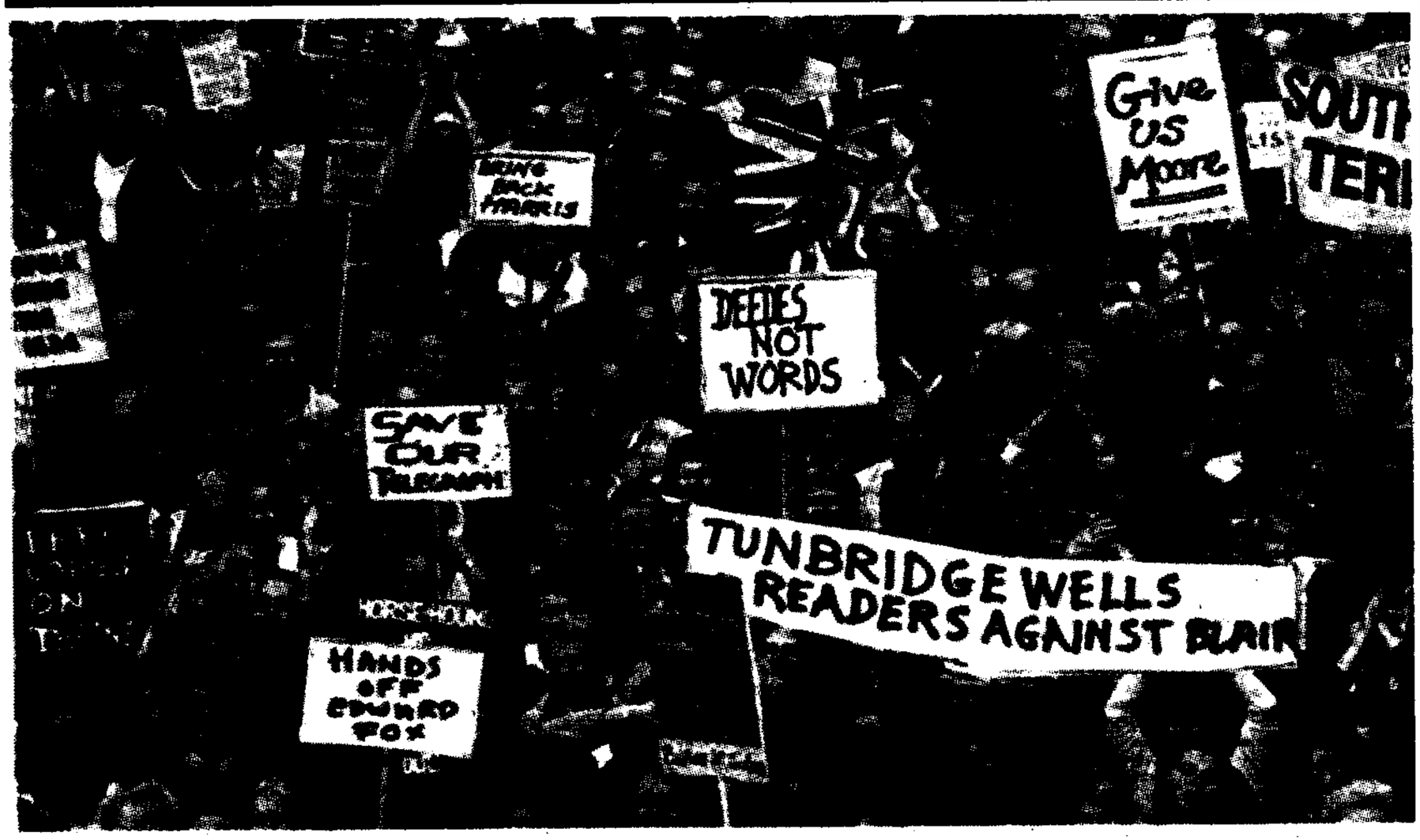
Union leader Mr Bob Spart remained defiant and threatened commuters with worse to come. "My members will probably go to work one day next week," he said, "and there could be further days of work right up to Christmas."



"We dumped the old Ghost Train ride, it wasn't terrifying enough!"

'Save The Telegraph'

YOUR 94-PAGE PULL-OUT SUPPLEMENT



Millions March Through London

by Our Entire Staff

Well over half the population of Britain turned out yesterday to proclaim their support for the Daily Telegraph.

Under the banner 'Life and Liz Hurley', they came from all four corners of Britain and marched with heads held high through the heart of London.

Wife and Liberty's Sale

When the numbers reached 50 million, a great cheer went up which could be heard as far away as Land's End.

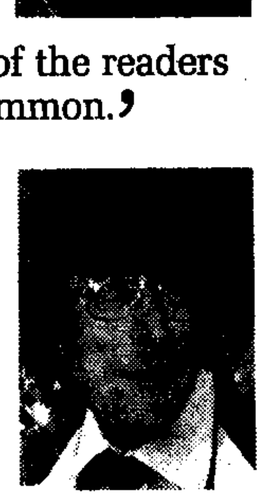
All ages were on the march – teenagers in their blue jeans mingled with old-age pensioners in their barbours and woolly socks, wealthy landowners with people who only buy it for the crossword.

But all of them were united in their passionate defence of one of England's oldest freedoms – "The right to read the Daily Telegraph".

What The Marchers Said

BILL DEEDES
(OAP), 107

'It'sh a wonderful inshtitushion – the idea that you could loshe the Daily Telegraph is preposteroush.'



CHARLES MOORE
(OE), 24

'A lot of people will lose their jobs. I've never known any other way of life. I started as a boy and can't imagine doing anything else.'

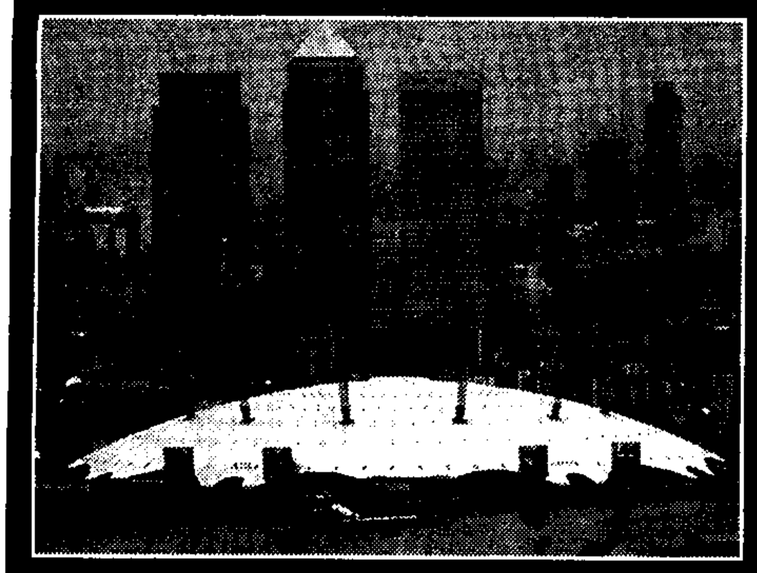
VICKI WOODS
57

'It's terribly sad if it goes to the wall – I mean, it's not all just toffs wearing silly hats. Some of the readers are frightfully common.'

SIR MAX HASTINGS
(DIY) 72

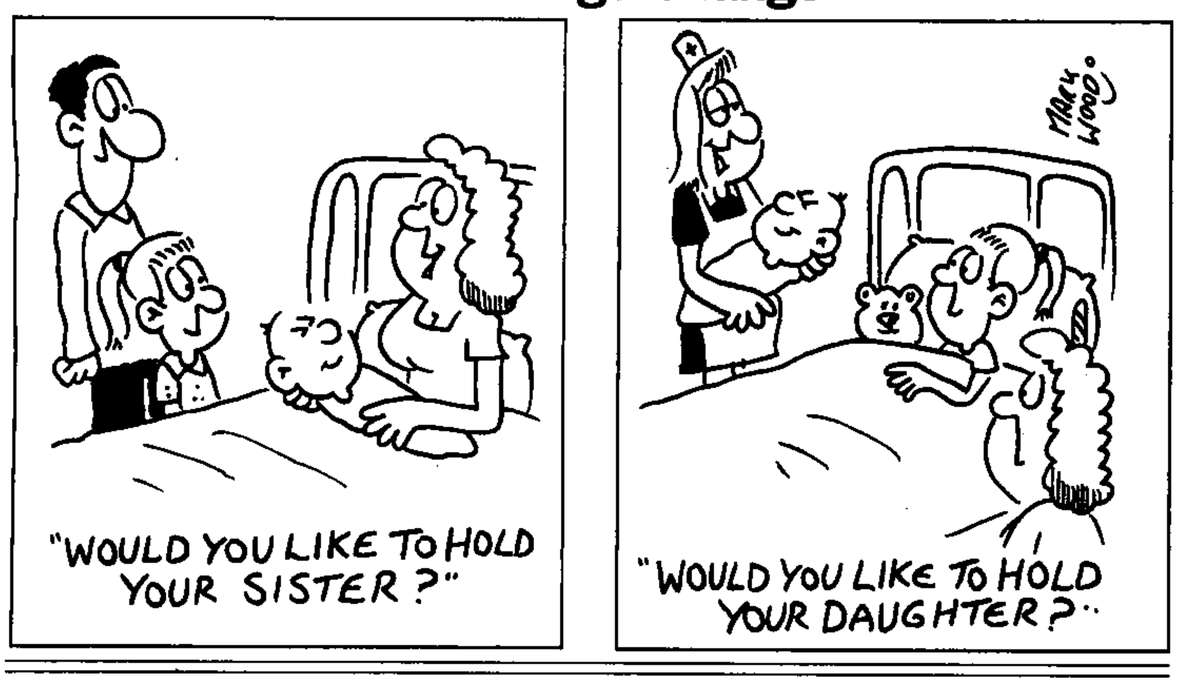
'Doesn't bother me if it goes. It's never been any good since I left. There's a lot of cruelty involved and a lot of snobbery. Maybe it's time for it to be replaced.'

WEAPONS INSPECTORS
IT'S A FACTORY FOR MAKING VIAGRA
PENNY FOR THE GUY?
WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION FACTORY
IS THAT WHAT IT SAYS IN ENGLISH! I HAD NO IDEA!
LOOK! LOOK! ISN'T THAT A CHAFFINCH?
YES, IT'S REALLY VERY SAD. WE SOW THEM EVERY YEAR, BUT NOTHING EVER COMES UP
RED SKY AT NIGHT SHEPHERD'S DELIGHT
PEAS
BEANS
LEEKS



THE NEW WEMBLEY STADIUM — HOW IT WILL LOOK

How Things Change



ST CAKES EXAM FURY

by Our Educational Staff **Barbara Alevel**

THE Headmaster of Britain's prestigious West Midlands independent boarding school St Cakes hit out today at Britain's examiners.

Said R.J. Kipling *(Motto: Exceedingly Good St Cakes)*, "This year's A-Levels are a complete scandal. The Government has clearly interfered to falsify the grades."

A-Level Playing Field

Kipling cited the case of one sixth-former, Kenya-born J.P. Kilimanjaro-Barkworth, who had been awarded an A grade in Psychology by the examiners, when he should clearly have been given a U.

"This boy," said the Headmaster, "is as thick as two short planks. Yet the examiners have given him an A grade.

"Now he has lost the chance to go into the City and will be forced to go to University instead. It is little short of a tragedy for him and for the school.

"We at St Cakes are known for the high standard of our fees. This sort of thing is not going to help."

LATE NEWS

A-Level to be replaced by new U-Level 94
Page 94 to be regraded down to page 49 49

ME AND MY SPOON

RABBI BLUE

Did spoons feature in your childhood?

Hullo Brian. Hullo Sue. You know, when I was a little boy growing up in the East End of London, my old grandmother used to stir her wonderful chicken soup. One day she couldn't find the spoon. So she used a new one. And d'you know, it tasted just the same.

What's the point of this story?

Hullo Brian. Hullo Sue. The point of the story is that it isn't the spoon that gives the soup its flavour. It's what you put into it. And that's what life's like. It's what you put into it that counts. Not what you stir it with.

Can spoons play a role in reconciling different religious faiths?

Hullo Sue. Hullo Brian. There's a famous story about an old Rabbi in Poland who invited a Catholic priest to supper and found he only had one spoon. Each of them insisted that the other one used the spoon with the result that neither of them had anything to eat and they both went to bed hungry. But not together of course, because they weren't gay, like I am.

Has anything amusing ever happened to you in connection with a spoon?

I always like to see the funny side of life with spoons or anything else. It helps you get through the day. God bless, Brian. God bless, Sue.

Actually my name is Tamish.

NEXT WEEK: Ruby Wax – *"Me And My Leg Wax."*

POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam Joan Littlewood, Theatre Impresario

So. Farewell
Then Joan
Littlewood.

With your
Famous cap
Set at a
Jaunty angle
On your head

You were the
Face of British
Theatre in the
Sixties.

Now the
Curtain has
Come down

And fings
Ain't wot
They used
To be.

E. J. Thribb (17½)

That Jeffrey Archer Lincoln Restaurant Menu in full

Porridge

– ❋ –

Jailbait

– ❋ –

Mr Toad In A Hole

– ❋ –

Gillian Shephard's Pie

– ❋ –

Banged-Up and Mash

– ❋ –

Just Desserts
Spotted Back

– ❋ –

To Drink
Mary Archer Whine

Police Cars at 1.30

the PREMIERSH*TS

PAUL WOOD

APPARENTLY THE F.A. HAS CONFIRMED THAT IT'S THE BIGGEST SIGNING IN FOOTBALL HISTORY...
SPORT
NORMAN FOSTER'S NEW WEMBLEY
£750M— AND HE DOESN'T EVEN HAVE TO KICK A BALL!
JAMMY BASTARD!

A Man of Letters

by Dame Sylvie Krin

Best-selling author of "La Dame Aux Camillas", "Heir of Sorrows" and "Tampax Britannica"

THE STORY SO FAR: Camilla is still seething over Charles's refusal to allow her to join the Countryside March.

Now read on..

CHARLES SAT at his Louis Theroux escritoire in the study at Highgrove, musing on what would be the subject of his next letter to the Lord Chancellor, Lord Lairgover.

His gaze wandered through the open window to the long drive and the avenue of ancient haw trees, their leaves already tinged with the golden hues of autumn.

Down the lane hummed the electric milk-float from the organic dairy with old Dimbleby at the wheel.

That was it! That was what had been annoying him. At last the Muse had descended like a ripened conker onto the verdant lawn.

Seizing his Dennis Waterman fountain pen, a gift from his art tutor, the late Sir Hugh Casson, he began to scribble furiously in his spidery hand...

Dear Lord Chancellor,

You will remember that when we met yesterday you very kindly asked me to let you know of any further concerns on my part about, you know, the whole collapse of this Britain thingy.

Well, it suddenly struck me that one of our biggest problems is those new-fangled cardboard milk cartons. They're absolutely impossible to open without spilling milk all over your waistcoat! It really is appalling.

Why can't they have glass bottles, like in the old days?

Yours sincerely,
Charles

With a sigh of contentment, Charles sat back and re-read his latest missive.

Yes, this would get Blair's government back on the right track. Everything in the garden would be lovely.

"EVERYTHING in the garden is lovely." Charles had found Camilla on the Laurens van der Post memorial bench in the Islamic parterre. She sat alone, puffing at her Gilbert and George Navy-Cut cigarette.

"Come on, old girl, you're not still angry with me about the march thingy, are you?"

Camilla took a deep drag of the cigarette and blew the acrid smoke in Charles's face.

"No, I'm not angry with you, Charles. I'm just not speaking to you."

Charles coughed, waving the smoke from his face. "Look, I thought I explained all this – in my position, if you want to change things, you can't be seen marching up and down the street with banners."

Her frosty expression seemed to be melting as she listened to his words of wisdom. Encouraged, he pressed on.

"You see, in this country, everything is done quietly, behind the scenes. A word in someone's ear from a chap to another chap. Or a letter, marked Private & Confidential, to the Lord Chancellor."

Now Camilla seemed to be fully engaged. Her eyes lit up.

"This is most interesting, Chazza." She stubbed out her cigarette with the heel of her shiny Lycett-Green riding boot. "And is that one of those letters you've got there?"

"Yes," Charles replied.

"Well, I'll post it for you, darling. On my walk into Cirencester. It's such a nice day and I need to stretch my legs."

Charles was delighted by this sudden change of mood. "Thanks a lot."

"THANKS a lot!" Charles took the ironed copy of the Sunday Telegraph from the manicured hands of Sir Alan Fitztightly and joined Camilla at the breakfast table.

"What's up, darling?" Camilla smiled solicitously. "You look as if someone's poisoned your organic free-range cornflakes."

Charles slumped into his chair limply, pointing at the hurtful headline that had taken the wind from his royal sails.

HAS HE GONE LETTER MAD?

"Look at this, Cazza. It's all here. My private letter. Printed in full. And a picture of me looking completely bonkers."

Camilla said nothing, pouring herself another cup of Rhodesian Roast black coffee.

"Who could have leaked this? Somebody is trying to make me look a complete fool."

"It's obviously someone at their end, isn't it?" she soothed, patting his hand. "Nobody here would do such a thing."

She got up and walked to the window.

Yes, thought Charles. She was probably right. Someone at their end. Someone in the Government. But then he caught sight of Camilla's reflection in the glass. And wasn't that a smile playing about her cherry-red lips?

Suddenly, the bright morning sun was eclipsed by a dark cloud and the room went very cold.

(To be continued)

DIARY

TRINNY & SUSANNAH

Trinny Woodall: This week's target for a complete style makeover is a guy who seems only too happy to dress like an ABSOLUTE FRUMP!

Susannah: His dress-sense is ZILCH. He favours truly GRUESOME suits and HIDEOUS ties – and his leisurewear has to be SEEN to be BELIEVED!

Trinny He's been travelling around the world these past eighty-odd years looking like a cross between a bag-man and Billy Bunter! Has the guy never heard of SEXY?

Susannah: Seems not, Trinny! He may be an international statesman and ex-Prime Minister but his clothes just shriek "Total slob!" Ghastly! Ghastly! Ghastly! So let's go and surprise him!

(Trinny and Susannah burst into the private dining room at the Carlton Club)

Susannah: Where is he? Where is he? Here he is! Here's the target – stand up, Edward, stand up this minute, man!

Sir Edward Heath: What is this intrusion? I demand an explanation! This behaviour is quite unacceptable!

Trinny: Can't wait to get my hands on that shirt! Blue and white stripes – I mean, REALLY! And you must be – what? – 20 stone?

Susannah: We're talking 20 stone ABSOLUTE MINIMUM!

Sir Edward: I demand to know what on earth is going on! This is an outrage!

Trinny: Tell fatso, Susannah!

Susannah *(swivelling him towards the camera)*: Edward, we've been secretly filming you over the past three weeks!!!

Trinny Remember how you had Sunday lunch in the garden with a group of close friends? And remember what you were wearing, Edward?

Susannah: That's it – a horrid vomit-yellow cardigan and perfectly GHASTLY urine-green open necked shirt! What were you thinking of, Edward? It was all so...so...BAGGY and SHAPELESS! Talk about TRAGIC! You must have such a low self-image! I guess you were bullied at school, were you? Eh?

Trinny: Of course he was! But you're one helluva sexy guy, Edward - you really are! God, I wish I had those tits! And look at that bum! Why are you hiding it, Edward? You've got to learn to emphasise those curves!

Susannah: And WE'RE going to TEACH YOU! We have here a cheque for TWO THOUSAND POUNDS, Edward, to give you a complete fashion makeover!!!!

Trinny: But first you've got to hand over your body and your wardrobe to US! Let's get rid of that dreadful jacket with its simply REVOLTING gold buttons for a start – grab it, Susannah!

***** VIDEO DIARY*****

Sir Edward *(sotto voce, weary)*: It certainly came as quite a shock. I have since suffered a sleepless night. But I have now had time to reflect. Looking through their secret films in the cool light of day, I see that they have made one or two cogent points worthy of further discussion. My hair being a case in point. They informed me in no uncertain terms that it was utterly lifeless and lacked any form of shape. Now when I study it, I see that it needs added body, always has done. No wonder I was forced to forfeit the leadership to that... to that....woman. She was never a Conservative. Not at all. Didn't know the meaning of the word. But her hair had the necessary body. Simple as that. And she always paid attention to her wardrobe. She was that sort of person. It all seems so clear. But there's still time to fight back.

***

(Trinny, Susannah and Edward in the studio)

Susannah: So how are you feeling about it now, then, Edward?

Sir Edward: Firstly, let me declare that –

Trinny: Those shoes! Susannah, look at those shoes! Big Yuk! My god, are you getting it wrong! I have never seen such GROTESQUE buckles! They'll have to go! And those cufflinks – Puke-eey! What WERE you thinking of, Edward!!??

Susannah: Into that changing-room – and bin the lot!!!

Trinny That's better. Now what we've got in mind for you is a much sleeker, sexier look. We're going to put you in touch with your softer, more feminine side. For evening wear, you should be going for stylish, loose-fitting, three-quarter length jackets with a bit of shape, maybe with a lovely tight polo-neck in a deep red or green to emphasise those fabulous tits, then some lovely canvassy bell-bottoms off the hip in navy blue or rust, then for a casual boozy lunch with close friends you should be going for something a little bit groovy, a little bit sexy, maybe a sleeveless tank-top, gathered at the waist, with a beautiful white linen shirt with huge bell cuffs, and then to round it off a pair of the most fabulous brightly-coloured Bermuda shorts to highlight that great bum of yours!

Sir Edward: That's as maybe. I will certainly give it my fullest consideration. But first you promised to take steps with my hair.

Susannah: I'm thinking modern, I'm thinking street, I'm thinking sexy. I see it shoulder-length, I see it with some lovely yellow, almost gold, highlights, I see it with the merest hint of quarter-inch pony-tail.

Sir Edward: That's something SHE never managed! Needless to say, the country never warmed to her. May we bring harmony, indeed!

***

Trinny This is when we see it all come together. And you know what? I simply can't wait! Out you come, Edward!

Susannah: Oh wow! Doesn't he look GORGEOUS! This is the moment of truth, Edward – the moment you look in the full-length mirror! So! Whaddya think?!!

Sir Edward: Oh, SUGAR! Goodness me. I'm...I'm... rendered quite speechless. I'm not sure I recognise myself. Good lord. It's a whole new look.

Trinny You're one helluva sexy guy, Edward. And a sexy guy needs a sexy look.

Susannah: It's elegant, it's sophisticated, it's curvy! It's very feminine – but at the same time very manly and *(continues ad nauseam)*

As told to

CRAIG BROWN

Celeb

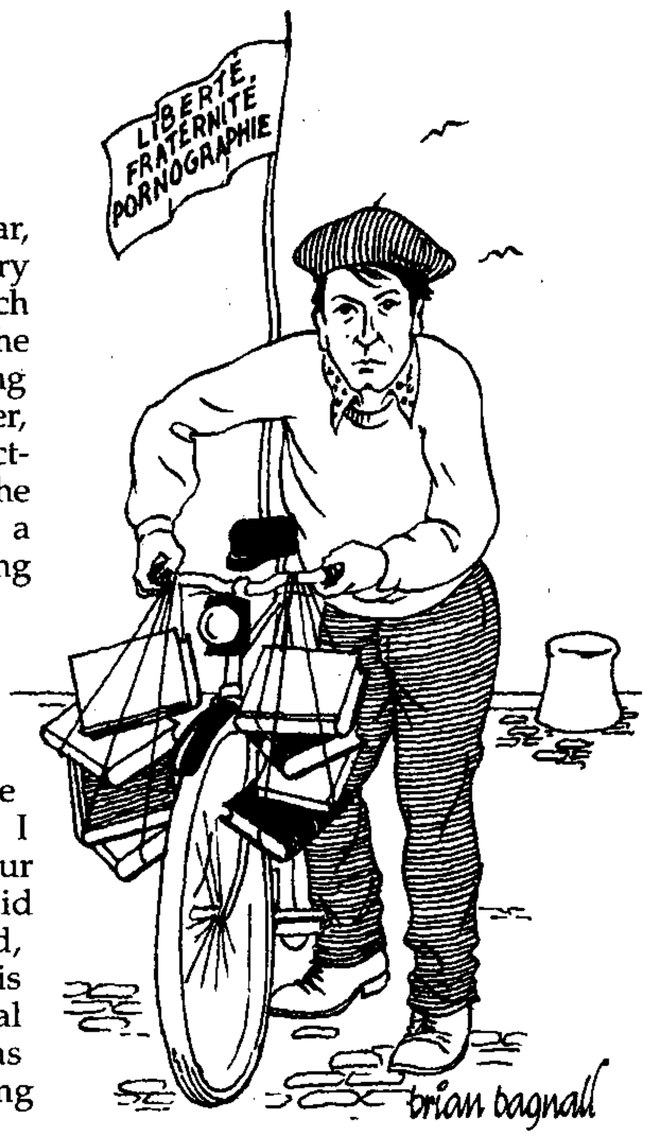
LIGGER

WHAT'S UP, DAD?
I'VE JUST LOOKED THROUGH MY ACCOUNTS, SON. BILLS, BILLS, BILLS, BLOODY BILLS... I JUST CAN'T AFFORD ALL THIS OUTLAY...
GLOOM
ALL I EVER DO IS SPEND, SPEND, SPEND.. IF IT GOES ON LIKE THIS I'LL BE BROKE SOON... OH GOD!
CHILL, DAD. YOU'RE GETTING DEPRESSED FOR NO REASON..
I MEAN, YOU'RE NOT ACTUALLY ON YOUR UPPERS, ARE YOU?
ER... WELL, NO...
I CLEAN FORGOT TO TAKE THEM THIS MORNING.
JOHNSON. TWO OF DAD'S SPECIAL BLUE PILLS PLEASE!
ER.. MAKE THAT THREE..

Literary Review

Man of French letters

Platform
Michel Houellebecq
(Heinemann, £12.99)



RIGHT from the end of last year, when various bilingual literary eminences recommended the French edition among their books of the year, one just *knew* there was going to be a fuss about *Platform*. As ever, the fuss is only tangentially connected to the book itself and concerns the author's recent appearance in a Gallic court on a charge of inciting racial hatred.

Judgment is pending on the incautious remarks attributed to M. Houellebecq in a French literary magazine to the effect that Islam is "dangerous" and "the most stupid" of religions. But I think we can take it that Monsieur H knows how to drop an acid comment or two. For the record, and presumably to emphasize his strict impartiality in the spiritual field, he also described the Bible as harbouring passages "so boring they make you want to shit".

In the wake of these outbursts profiles of quizzical, cigarette-flourishing (he doesn't smoke, apparently, but it looks good in photographs) Michel, have been ten a penny in the continental press. When it comes to the spectacle of writers intervening on some greater stage, the contrast is, of course, a painful one. We have Martin Amis sedulously trying to connect his family life up to Stalin, but now the French run to real live racial hatred! Whatever else may be said of it, *Platform*, a successor to the best-selling *Atomised*, is a quintessentially *French* artefact, to the point where the stink of the Seine sometimes seem to rise off the page.

Its hero – OK, make that protagonist – also called Michel, is a bored 40-year-old whose father has just been murdered by an immigrant. A confirmed onanist, porn-viewer and all-round couch potato, Michel takes a restorative vacation in the Far East (various massage parlour encounters, meticulously reproduced). Here he meets up with 27-year-old Valerie. Back in Paris they embark on a riotous affair, involving a passionate coupling in the street and some railway-carriage masturbation, the latter in the presence of an amused lady traveller who later joins them in a zealous threesome.

Believing that "sexual liberation in the West is dead", and together with Valerie's boss Jean-Yves, they set to work to create a sex-tour empire, this – in a degenerate modern world – being the only environment in which, er, "love" can be found.

Though brimful of contemporary French obsessions – pornography, lifestyle tics, *les sales negres en Afrique* and so on – *Platform*, perhaps predictably, gives no idea of the level on which it presumes to operate. Rather like J.G. Ballard's projections of the soulless, dystopian future it could function perfectly well as a study of the de-natured, amoral mind or as a satire of a study thereof. On the other hand, it could simply be that M. Houellebecq – who recently claimed that he had never had a coherent idea in his head – doesn't know himself.

Predictably enough it all ends in carnage, with Valerie's death in an Islamic terrorist attack. *Zut alors!* That Gallic inscrutability! Is Monsieur M a disguised moralist lamenting the iniquities of a bruised and unconfident present, or just fiddling away cynically while Rome, or in this case a Thai holiday resort, burns? In the end, these distinctions scarcely matter when set against the novel's wider agenda, which is that desperate, all-consuming need to provoke. And here again, it reveals itself as an authentically *French* production.

M. Houellebecq belongs, in fact, to that long and relatively honourable tradition of self-consciously outrageous scamp-cum-bad-lads that goes all the way back to Rimbaud. The whole thing may have nothing to do with literature (*pace* Jonathan Meades who thinks it resembles Burgess, Nabokov, De Lillo and co) but at least there is the fascination – and the fun – of watching an alien culture tying itself into self-absorbed knots.

The 20-year hitch

The Crimson Petal And The White
Michel Faber
(Canongate Books, £17.99)

THE biggest mistake Noel Coward and Alan Ayckbourn ever made was to admit that they wrote their plays in three or four days. Although Shakespeare – as a working man of theatre who finished at least 37 dramas – was almost certainly a swift quill, literary critics adhere to the theory of the midnight oil. Speed is associated with triviality.

The horrible truth is that you can't put a stopwatch on creativity. Masterpieces have been written in a week; decades have been spent on failures. Proof of the rule is this breezeblock of a novel on which its author, Michel Faber, has been working for 20 years. The only longer known gestation period for a book was the late Harold Brodkey's three-decade stretch on *The Runaway Soul*. When the book came out, an American critic joked that Brodkey had made the first serious mistake of his literary career: publishing. Faber, too, may have been better in anticipation.

Resident in the Scottish Highlands but Dutch by birth, Faber is ineligible for the Booker and probably won't make up for it with the WH Smith Thumping Good Read prize unless the judges interpret the name literally and seek a book which would be good for thumping people.

And, though unable to be entered, *The Crimson Petal And The White* is in every other way a perfect Booker book. It's a baggy (well, at 850 pages, perhaps more tent-y) historical epic which tries to write about Victorian London as Dickens might have if only he could have taken advantage of our generation's knowledge of medicine and irony and our obscenity laws.

It's this conceit – "the first 19th century novel of the 21st century", runs the publisher's cute tagline – which is the book's first problem. Even before Faber began his elongated composition, John Fowles had done the nod-and-wink Victorian in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. And, during his two decades holed up in his croft, Peter Carey made the genre of mock-Dickens his own with *Jack Maggs*. On this year's Booker shortlist, Sarah Waters does something similar in *Fingersmith*.

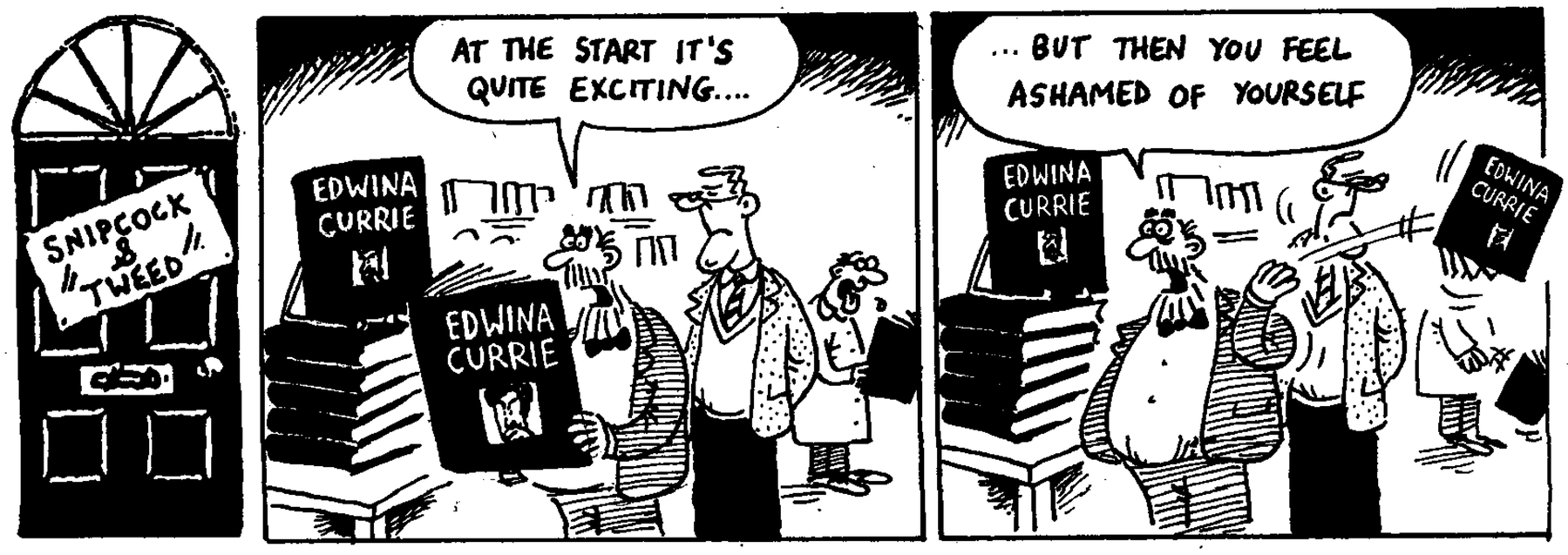
The point is that Fowles, Carey and Waters each brought a significant new perspective to the Victorian material: respectively a sort of feminism, an Australian view of criminal deportation and a revelation of lesbian life in the late 19th century. The only reason behind Faber's pastiche seems to be to put a prostitute at the centre of the story and approach her with a sociological sympathy lacking at the time.

Faber is able to be explicit about what kind of sex his whore-heroine, Sugar, has with her clients and scientifically accurate about the dangerous abortifacient douches she uses but his general point – we think more of women than they did – was made by Fowles 30 years ago at half the length.

That other long-timer, Brodkey, betrayed his long delay in publication with sentences which were ruinously overworked: paragraphs really did read as if they had been worked on for years, their clarity receding further with each recasting. Strangely, Faber's book has the opposite problem. Despite a writing period which claims to have burned enough midnight oil to keep Saddam in nuclear weapons for years, the prose seems dismayingly hasty.

First-thought formulations fill most pages: "boyish enthusiasm"; "hardened souls"; "encyclopaedic repertoire"; "modest home"; "blessed relief". You become uncomfortably aware that this is an author not writing in his first language. There's nothing wrong with literature in translation; but the translating is generally better done by someone else.

Unfortunately manuals on post-modernism do seem to have published in Dutch and so Faber uses the weary device of addressing the reader throughout as "you" and archly anticipating our responses. Like much in an over-long and over-hyped book, that style probably seemed new and exciting when the author wrote the first pages 20 years ago. Which only shows that time taken over writing is not necessarily well-spent.



BOOKS & BOOKMEN

■ BBC Worldwide's decision to "postpone indefinitely" publication of Michael Barrymore's "warts and all" autobiography *Running Away From Myself*, is a curious one in that the corporation seems to want it both ways.

It is normal in book contracts to insert a clause asserting the publisher's right to reject the manuscript and to be repaid any advances in such an event. In this case, though, the BBC has neither rejected nor accepted the manuscript.

Once the fuss has blown over, Worldwide may regard it expedient to go ahead anyway, looking for a return on its investment, rumoured to be in the region of £500,000. If it does not, and if the rejection clause is invoked, the disgraced entertainer will be out of pocket but will be able to see if there are any other takers for his ghost-written outpourings. Though no one is likely to offer anywhere near half a million for the ramblings of a coke-addled modern-day Fatty Arbuckle, the likes of John Blake and Virgin might take it on for a smaller outlay.

■ *APART from the fact that few will want to see where Barrymore's warts are, the book is unlikely to reveal much.* Back in Business, *his first stab at autobiography published by Hutchinson in 1995, rehashed tales of his period in rehab (which obviously didn't work), but failed to mention anything about his sexuality. Barely a year later, he came out. Ever feel you've been short-changed?*

The one to watch though will be Catch a Falling Star *by his vengeful ex-wife Cheryl, due in November from Robson. Already she has suggested Barrymore might have perjured himself at the Stuart Lubbock inquest by claiming to be a non-swimmer, and she hints that there's more to come...*

■ **CONFUSION at the *Times*, whose Play listings section finds a gentler side to military historian Richard Holmes, presenter of BBC2's *War Walks* series.**

"War history aside, [he] is a romantic biographer who has written on Shelley and Coleridge," says the CV box. Er, no. That would be the other Richard Holmes, professor of biographical studies at the University of East Anglia, to whom every single fact in the piece refers.

■ *WHAT does a wise book reviewer do when the paper he works for has splashed out fifty grand on the work in question? For Bryan Appleyard, reviewing Ken Wharfe's Diana: Closely Guarded Secret for the Sunday Times, it's easy.*

"It is, say some, outrageous, a disgraceful betrayal of trust. Oh come on," he opines, dismissing those who object to the bodyguard's cash-in project as "whiners". Just over the page from Appleyard's review, the section's diary opens with the observation "Shamelessness is on the up in literary journalism..."

■ THE Canongate situation grows ever more confusing (see *Eyes passim*). Different factions among Jamie Byng's enemies suggest he is planning to sell up and/or move the whole shebang from Edinburgh to London. His friends, however, say the stake he is trying to sell is his ex-wife's small minority holding and there are no plans to move. Which mob is right?

Well, his heart's definitely still in it, if a recent row with Andrew Crumey, the literary editor of *Scotland on Sunday* is anything to go by, even if he does seem to be getting a little paranoid. In the *SoS* review of *The Crimson Petal and the White* by Michel Faber, which ran a month before the book was due in the shops, Stuart B Kelly summarised much of the plot and gave away the climax of the book, or, more precisely, revealed that there wasn't really much of a climax or resolution. Apart from these transgressions, the tone was of qualified enthusiasm, recognising Faber's potential but suggesting he wasn't there just yet.

Byng immediately shot back with an email to Crumey in which he declared himself and Faber "pissed off" at the timing of the piece and Kelly's indiscretion. "Is SB Kelly a frustrated novelist as well as a frustrated reader?" he asked rather bitterly. He also said that it "makes me think long and hard about when we should be sending you proofs of our books as I would rather you hadn't reviewed it all than to have done what you have done. I know that newspapers like to steal a march on their rivals but..."

A fair point; but later in the correspondence, Byng alleged that lit eds who run reviews early usually "have ulterior motives". Crumey defended his reviewer and suggested Byng was over-reacting. Indeed, Crumey has long been a supporter of Canongate, and Byng has previously been happy enough with Kelly's reviews to quote them in jacket blurbs. When will the love-in resume?

■ EDITORS at Orion note with interest and alarm the number of books being bought by their company from one agency, namely Capel and Land.

Since it was established in 1999 by Georgina Capel, the agency has built up an impressive client list, including Julie Burchill, New Statesman deputy editor Cristina Odone, Henry Porter, Kunal Basu, Andrew Roberts, Simon Sebag Montefiore and Louis Theroux among its authors.

Curiously, it seems to have had great success placing these writers with one particular publisher: Orion. Burchill's collected Grauniad columns, her book on Princess Diana and her novel Married Alive were all published by Orion. The complete fiction oeuvres of Odone and Porter have been made available through Orion. The novels of Basu and histories by Roberts and Sebag Montefiore are all published by Weidenfeld and Nicolson in hardback and Phoenix in paperback – both imprints being members of the Orion family. Meanwhile, Theroux's Undercover Diaries will be published by Orion next October.

Are these deals linked in any way with the fact that Orion is run by Anthony "Fatty" Cheetham, Capel's husband? All of the authors named would be saleable to other publishers, but this way the commission stays in the family.

'Bookworm'

"Hidden in the attic I keep a hideous novel called Dorian *by Will Self!"*

Pseuds Corner

He [Roy Keane] is not of course the first Irishman to be accused by the British press of inflicting physical damage on a beautiful young boy. Wilde would sympathise with his current Haaland predicament. Blonds, threats of litigation, even references to intercrural sex ("stick it up your bollocks, you English cunt"), we have been here before. Nor does the book's serialisation in the Times, the paper that forged scandalous accusations against Parnell, exactly inspire confidence.

RAY RYAN, Review of Roy Keane's autobiography, *Guardian*

Does his [Keane's] refusal to fight and fail for his country on foreign fields actually make him a principled post-nationalist, very much in the mould of the Good Friday agreement?

Ibid

The conference aims to open a space for interrogating the relations between critique and inclusivity, not privileging either term, in a move that might be termed 'post-disciplinary' in the sense of questioning the very boundaries which keep well-disciplined and critical disciplines in place.

From a Lancaster University Management School web-site launch announcement

If a dog came in here now I'd converse with him in Welsh.

RHYS IFANS
Observer Magazine

Andy Birtwhistle 'Insects, urine and flatulence: motifs of control and turbulence on Warner Brothers cartoon soundtracks.'

From the programme of 'Genre' an interdisciplinary conference staged by the Thames Valley University's London College of Music & Media

As an historian of sorts, I view clothes and hats as pieces of living history. I live my clothes.

PETRONELLA WYATT,
Spectator

The toilet plunger, as vernacular and democratic as an object gets, is the source of the most popular incarnation of avant-garde aleatory music. This a major Ellington achievement, totally unremarked by the musicologists and critics who would readily admit that – save for movie soundtracks – aleatory music, from Boulez down, has not found an audience. Ellington's jungle style is Varese for the people by way of the plumber.

ALFRED APPEL JR on Duke Ellington, *London Review of Books*

Pseuds Corporate

With the continued growth of hand-held foods, the commercialisation of Kerry's FlavorCoreTM patented sauce filling cold forming extrusion technology has attracted industry wide interest for appetiser, hand-held and centre-of-plate applications.

From the annual report of Irish food company the Kerry Group.

CONTRIBUTORS: Nigel Longhurst, Neil Wyatt, Kevin M. Buckley, K.G. Henderson, 'Hamish', Jill Gunsell, Alasdair Maclean, Harry Wallop.

£10 paid for all entries

IN THE BACK

MAPELEY: TWO SLIPS AND A SILLY POINT

INLAND Revenue chiefs were disappointed to discover that other people in the media can read *Private Eye*; and that they can recycle the remarkable fact, only seven months after it was first revealed in the *Eye*, that the Revenue and Customs have sold their prime properties to a company in a tax haven.

The Revenue's response to the publication of this fact in the *Financial Times* and *Guardian*, not to mention BBC Online, has been consistent with its approach from the outset: that very little information should be divulged, and that what does come out is wrong.

Consider, for instance, its claims in its initial press release in March 2001 that the properties would be sold to Mapeley Ltd, a company registered in Britain. As the *Eye* has repeatedly reported, this was quite wrong. The lucky company buying the buildings was not Mapeley Ltd. The Revenue claims this was a clerical error or, to use its words, "an inadvertent slip". If so, it was not the only such slip. The Inland Revenue annual report for the year ending 31 March 2001, published in December 2001 eight months after the controversial sale, and signed off by the accounting officer, Inland Revenue chief Nick Montagu, reports on "the sale of the majority of properties to Mapeley Steps Contractor Ltd (also registered in Britain)". *Whoops!* Wrong again.

As the *Eye* has revealed, and the Revenue at last admits, the buildings were sold to Mapeley Steps Ltd, registered in Bermuda – a notorious tax haven. Any punter who puts in false accounts to the Inland Revenue can expect (at least) sharp criticism from that quarter. Whether any action will be taken by the Revenue against the Revenue for submitting false accounts in 2001 is not yet clear.

When the *Guardian* asked the Revenue about the sale, a spokeswoman claimed that all payments by the Revenue to the Bermuda company would be taxed. This is nonsense. Anyone who knows anything about tax avoidance knows how easy it is for a company in a tax haven to avoid tax. All the company has to do is to borrow enough money to generate enough interest to wipe out the income. This interest will then be paid by the company to another tax haven company tax free.

If the Revenue spokeswoman did not understand that, Mapeley certainly did. Its director Robin Priest told the *Financial Times* that the Revenue was aware of the tax benefits from the deal. And certainly there's no tax coming from the UK companies Mapeley Steps and Mapeley Steps Contractor Ltd. Both include an identical boast in their 2001 annual reports as follows: "No liability to taxation will arise in the foreseeable future."

Perhaps the blandest reassurance to come out of the Revenue appeared in the *Guardian* on 24 September. "Neither the Inland Revenue nor Customs and Excise would have entered into an arrangement that was in any way at odds with the letter or spirit of the UK fiscal regulations." What a relief. But the real point is whether the Bermuda

The Board of the Inland Revenue: Nick Montagu fourth from left

property deals contradict the very clear statement on "harmful tax practices" in havens made by the Inland Revenue's own boss, the paymaster-general Dawn Primarolo.

In a press release in June 2000 she said: "In today's global economy, it is more important than ever to put an end to harmful tax practices that encourage tax evasion, distort capital flows and erode national tax bases. These practices harm all countries both developed and developing." The very same press release defines a harmful tax practice as "low or no taxation on mobile, financial and other services income coupled with lack of effective exchange of information, lack of transparency (in tax or regulatory laws and practices) or the absence of requirement of substantial activities". This was precisely the regime operating in the capital of tax avoidance, Bermuda, at the time of the Inland Revenue property sale.

Many may think (and the treasury may hope) that the Mapeley story is over. But no such luck. Eighteen months into its lucrative, tax-avoiding contract with the "new" Labour government, the vastly rich gentlemen who run Mapeley are quietly but firmly coming back for more. The Inland Revenue's accounts put the value to the Revenue of the Mapeley contract as £271m, made up of a cash payment by the Mapeley group of £157m and "reduced future rentals" for the Revenue of £115m. These "reduced future rentals" don't represent real income for the taxpayer. They are an accounting fiction worthy of Enron. In fact, the accounts show that in exchange for a cash windfall of £157m, the Revenue will spend £44m more each year to pay for properties they used to own. Moreover, the accounts show that on an independent valuation the buildings sold to Mapeley were worth £341m, nearly £100m more than Mapeley paid for them.

But these generous terms are apparently not enough for the company. The recently-produced accounts for Mapeley Steps Contractor Ltd include, right at the end, the following surprise revelation. "These cash flows assume a successful outcome to current negotiations with the departments [Inland Revenue and Customs] in relation to the restructuring of certain aspects of the STEPS contract, including additional revenues and changes to the financing arrangements and contract structure. The directors have received a signed letter of intent from the departments in relation to these key proposals and therefore consider that the outcome to these negotiations will be successful."

As with any PFI contract, the amount of the "additional revenues" that will emerge from these secret negotiations will be "commercial in confidence" (that is, hidden from the taxpayers who are paying them).

PS: On 13 September Mapeley announced that it had "fitted the final piece in the assembly of our management team" — a team which apparently was not in place when the deal was done with the Inland Revenue. Former chief executive Robin Priest has been kicked upstairs and replaced with Bob Spoerri, former chief executive of Jones Lang LaSalle, huge international property dealers who specialise in "tax-enhanced sale and leaseback transactions" very similar to the STEPS contract.

PPS: Mapeley's adviser on the STEPS deal was, er, Arthur Andersen.

FOLLOW-UPS... FOLLOW-UPS... FOLLOW-UPS... FOLLOW-UPS... FOLLOW-UPS...

■ **BYE BYE CHAI:** Labour party donor and private health guru Chai Patel has finally stepped down as a government adviser on the elderly and as a trustee of Help the Aged. This follows the neglect and suffering endured by frail elderly people at Lynde House, one of his former care homes (see *Eyes passim ad nauseam*).

Westminster Healthcare, of which Patel was chief executive until a recent lucrative sell-off, consistently denied a catalogue of claims of mistreatment, lack of care and poor management in the £600-plus-a-week Twickenham home in west London. While it did so, Patel enjoyed unquestioning support from his friends in government and at Help the Aged – to whom Lynde House residents and relatives had even appealed for help.

Even when independent inspector Mary MacLaren wrote to 11 families revealing provisional findings of neglect, Help the Aged didn't think this "constituted evidence". It also said it was "not placed to take on personal cases of this nature".

When the full damning report was finally published last month after a three-month delay by Westminster Healthcare, which wanted to publish a three-volume rebuttal, Help the Aged still appeared in denial. In a statement to the *Eye*, Michael Lake, director-general of the charity, said: "I would like to take the opportunity now to confirm that the Charity is completely satisfied with Dr Patel's performance as Trustee." The department of health also said there was no plan for Dr Patel to step down.

So what's changed? Steve Jones, of Help the Aged, maintained it was all a matter of timing. He claimed the charity had been working "behind the scenes" to push for the long-awaited publication of the report and that when it was fully considered it was agreed at a meeting with Dr Patel that the best course of action would be his resignation because of a "perceived conflict of interest".

What a shame it didn't recognise that conflict last year, when Vincent Cable, the local Lib Dem MP, took up the exasperated families' cases and some of their disturbing stories appeared in the *Eye* and elsewhere.

■ **TAX AVOIDANCE:** While the government strives to stop firms avoiding tax, the Inland Revenue seems keen to recruit the best of the tax avoiders.

In a foreword to a recent treasury publication, *Modernising Stamp Duty*, Ruth Kelly, economic secretary to the treasury, wrote: "The government is also concerned about growing avoidance of stamp duty by a minority, at the expense of the majority of taxpayers."

If you run a property company and would like to structure property transactions so as not to pay too much stamp duty, you should see a solicitor from one of the top legal firms that specialise in this business. One such is NabarroNathanson, whose partners frequently advertise their expertise in avoiding stamp duty.

Another excellent firm for advice on avoiding stamp duty is Allen & Overy, whose bulletin this year announced something called a Convertible Bond Structure. Among the benefits of the structure was the fact that "no stamp duty reserve tax is payable on the issue of non-sterling denominated bonds into the clearing system".

The Inland Revenue, the government body that collects taxes and hounds tax avoiders, recognises the expertise of the big legal firms in avoiding stamp duty. Proof of that are two recent "secondments" to the Revenue from property solicitors' firms. Into the Revenue's stamp taxes, capital and savings department go two new full-time workers: John Staheli, experienced tax solicitor from, er, NabarroNathanson, and Mandy Potten, keen young tax queen from, er, Allen & Overy.

PENSIONS

JUDGES 9, OMBUDSMAN 0

***EYE* readers may recall the acrimonious dispute between former pensions ombudsman Dr Julian Farrand and a select, well-heeled band of top pensions lawyers.**

In one of his reports Dr Farrand, who assessed people's complaints free without any lawyers present, referred in not entirely complimentary terms to the disproportionate influence of rich pensions lawyers and their companies. Dr Farrand left the post in August last year to be replaced as ombudsman by David Laverick.

David Laverick

Mr Laverick has just published his report for his first year. He records nine cases that got to the courts on appeal from the ombudsman. In all but one, the original decision in favour of the complainants was made by Dr Farrand.

In the first, a Mrs Copnall had alleged that she had been discriminated against by her employer, Henry Boot. Dr Farrand agreed. Henry Boot appealed, and won. In the second, the big insurance company Legal & General had asked for an extension of time over a deadline set by Dr Farrand. Dr Farrand refused, and the company took the case to judicial review. Mr Justice Silber found for the company. In the third, a fireman complained that his pension had been wrongly assessed by the Kent and Medway Towns Fire Authority. His complaint was upheld by the ombudsman, and although the amount was only a few hundred pounds, the authority appealed. Mr Justice Blackburne upheld the appeal.

The fourth was against the trustees of a trade union pension fund. A Mr Allen complained that his pension had been wrongly assessed. Dr Farrand agreed; the trustees appealed; and Mr Justice Lightman found against the complainant. In the fifth, Mr Albert Garwood complained that his employer, the Royal Sun Alliance Life and Pensions Ltd, had switched his pension to a different scheme and promised to maintain the same level of benefits. It had not done so. Dr Farrand upheld the complaint. The company appealed, and Mr Justice Ferris upheld the appeal. (Into the bargain, the judge ruled that the ombudsman was not a respondent to the appeal, and had no right to be heard in court.)

In the sixth case a doctor employed by the police argued that her time in a previous police force and in a local authority should be taken into account when assessing her pension. Dr Farrand agreed. The police appealed and Mr Justice Blackburne upheld the appeal. In the seventh, the issue was compensation for redundancy and the extent to which this counted towards a pension. Dr Farrand found for the council worker. The council (Tameside) appealed, and Mr Justice Rimer upheld the appeal. In the eighth case, a Mr Brian Smith complained about the administration of pension schemes – and the "divestment" from them of some £3m by companies associated with Britannic Asset Management. Dr Farrand held that the companies were indeed administrators of the scheme, but the companies appealed and Mr Justice Lightman concluded that they were not administrators and moreover that the ombudsman had no jurisdiction to investigate the complaint.

In the ninth case a Mrs Shillcock had complained that her exclusion from the Uppingham school staff pension scheme was discriminatory, and Dr Farrand agreed. He noticed that 94 percent of the low-paid non-teaching staff were women and they were all excluded from the scheme, and thus could not claim death benefits. Dr Farrand agreed. The school appealed and Mr Justice Neuberger upheld the appeal. He went on to find that the ombudsman had no jurisdiction over death in service benefits. The final score was: Rich pension lawyers and their companies 9, Ombudsman nil.

Mr Laverick was obviously impressed. In his introduction to this year's report, he writes: "My reading of the situation was that I had stepped into an office whose previous inhabitant had found himself in conflict with the judiciary some of whose members seem also to have relished that conflict. In my view such conflict, and the style of such conflict, was not good for the ombudsman's office, for the courts or for the providers of pension schemes. Those who have been accustomed to look through the annual report of the pensions ombudsman to enjoy the baiting of courts and lawyers will, I fear, be disappointed by the current offering."

Quite. The baiting days are over. All is peace now, and even if you do get a better pension from the ombudsman, you will almost certainly lose it on appeal.

SHOPPING MAUL

CAN you spot anything in common in the following four incidents?

In January 1999, James Matthews, aged 12, was killed when he was hit in the face by a swinging steel barrier as his mother drove out of the B&Q superstore in Boundary Road, Norwich. The barrier crashed through the windscreen, and through the car, missing James's mother and sister by inches. James's father, Dr Ken Matthews, a GP, was driving a few cars behind his wife, and was held up in the commotion until he realised to his horror that his family was involved in the accident. He tended his son until the ambulance arrived but the boy died two weeks later. After the inquest, the Matthews's family solicitor said: "The inquest clearly established that B&Q failed to secure the offending barrier gate. James's death was avoidable. A young life has been prematurely ended and for his family their lives can never be the same." B&Q grovelled. Its spokeswoman Lorain Coutts said: "We have changed the design of our barriers and we have instigated more rigorous checks. We believe that we have acted to ensure it doesn't happen again."

A month later, on Valentines Day, 14 February 1999, Mike Fowler, a market stall trader, was leaving Splott Market in Cardiff when an unsecured metal barrier swung into his path. The barrier struck Mr Fowler on the head and chest and effectively wrote off his Land Rover. Mr Fowler has been ill ever since, and has had to give up his job. He is suing the directors of the market trading company. Cardiff council has taken no action.

In November 2001, at Bloxwich, Walsall, in the west Midlands, Doreen Brown and Kenneth Gardener were leaving the Asda car park when their small Peugeot car was struck by a steel barrier that swung across their path. Both were badly hurt. Doreen Brown said later she thought her end had come, and Kenneth Gardener fainted. When Walsall environmental health officers indicated they would prosecute ASDA, they were astonished to be told by the company that the council was infringing the human rights act. The prosecution went ahead and ASDA was fined £9,000, with a further £9,000 costs. District Judge Michael James said: "It was clear that the company had done nothing to ensure the safety in their car park and had completely failed to carry out the required risk assessment."

How seriously did ASDA take this prosecution? A few months after the Bloxwich incident, on 12 May this year, Kenneth Farr was driving with his four-year-old daughter out of the car park at the ASDA store in Grangetown, Cardiff. A heavy steel barrier swung into his path and crashed through the windscreen into his head. He was almost decapitated and died soon afterwards. An inquest is likely to be held in November. The *Daily Mirror* described the incident as "a freak accident". Exactly how much of a freak it was can be assessed from the other three incidents reported here.

LIFE SENTENCE AT FELTHAM

NEGLECT at the infamous Feltham jail for young offenders contributed to the death of Kevin Jacobs, a 16-year-old with a history of mental health problems (see *Eye* 1040), an inquest jury decided last week.

The damning verdict is no surprise. Kevin's suicide mirrored that of another teenager at the jail, Kevin Henson, a year earlier. Both had mental health problems, a history of family breakdown and institutional neglect, and both had suicidal tendencies. Both, however, were locked alone in cells and were able to make nooses and hang themselves.

After Kevin Henson's death, west London coroner Alison Thompson sent the home office a series of concerns about the treatment of "at risk" inmates, in particular about the breakdown in communication between those in charge of them.

Last week she was doing the same following the findings on Kevin Jacobs's death. And in coming months no doubt the coroner who looks into the death by hanging in another young offender jail, Stoke Heath, of Joseph Scholes – also mentally ill and abused and only just 16 – will do the same too.

Though jails are no place for vulnerable children, home secretary David Blunkett's policy on youth crime means juveniles are being locked up in record numbers (now around 10,000 a year). Jails are of course much cheaper than better-staffed and equipped local authority secure homes, which have experience dealing with such youngsters.

Kevin Jacobs had been in care since he was two, moving from one children's home to another. He was also subject to sexual abuse. When he was sent to Feltham, on a six-month detention order for robbery, everyone involved in his care, from social workers to prison staff, considered him vulnerable, at risk and disturbed. During his three months at the 700-bed institution, he was the victim of bullying and self-harm. Only two weeks before his death he had managed to hang himself to the point of unconsciousness.

Over the next few days he smashed a light in his cell and was found with a plastic knife, ripped sheets and a ligature hook under his bed. He was moved to the Health Care Centre where he smashed up his cell and described experiencing flashbacks to sexual abuse that he had suffered in care. Concerned for his safety, he was placed in a safe, low-stimulus cell overnight with 15-minute checks. But two days before his death, he was returned to the normal wing and because the "safe" cell was being refurbished, he was placed in one with everything he needed to kill himself.

None of the doctors who saw Kevin specialised in child and adolescent psychiatry and nor did they have all relevant information on his background. No full mental health assessment was ever done; and there was no attempt by Feltham, Lambeth social services or the Youth Justice Board to find an alternative placement for Kevin as his condition deteriorated.

A damning psychiatric assessment prepared for Kevin's family but for some reason not permitted as evidence to the inquest by Dr Anne Jaspar, director of forensic child and adolescent mental health services, concluded his death was a culmination of systemic errors and problems that could not be blamed on any one person. "I am of the opinion that there were numerous opportunities to intervene to prevent Kevin's death, but these were not exploited and the tragic outcome is the death of a 16-year-old boy in a closed environment where it should be possible to keep the inmates alive for the duration of their stay."

You can contact Paul Foot on 020 7287 3183 or the In the Back team on 020 7437 4017

In the City

SHAREHOLDERS in shipping giant P&O, not to mention perhaps even the great and good chairman Lord Sterling, will be intrigued in this time of heightened awareness of corporate governance and transparency by the recent award of an at least £7m advertising contract to a company run by the wife of a P&O executive.

The contract was awarded by P&O Ferries and covers its pan-European advertising and media buying and planning accounts for its three ferry operations which have now been merged following the £150m buyout of minority shareholder Stena Line.

The contract did not go – somewhat surprisingly, it was felt by some observers – to major contender J Walter Thompson, which had long worked on the P&O account. Instead the international admen were beaten by a small, little known agency from Maidstone, Link ICA. Link had previously shared the P&O Stena part of the account with JWT.

The surprise over this decision announced in late August was increased when it emerged that the managing director and ten percent shareholder in Link ICA was the wife of John Govett, recently promoted to commercial director of tourist services for the merged ferry group, which includes P&O North Sea Ferries and P&O Portsmouth.

Govett is also a director of P&O Stena Line which operates ferries on the Dover-Calais and Dover-Zeebrugge routes. Govett now has overall responsibility for marketing P&O ferries. And just to complete this cosy picture, before joining Link ICA Annette Davies, now Davies-Govett, worked for P&O in its marketing department.

Now presumably Link ICA was the best bid and certainly P&O declares that the decision was made with knowledge of the relationship by the appropriate P&O directors, including Govett. So that's all right, then!

Govett says that Link began working for P&O about four years ago, not long after it was set up. In July 2000 Annette Davies joined the company and was given a ten percent share stake. She gave the same Kent address as Govett.

In November 2000 P&O Stena Line (director J. Govett) awarded its £5 million radio and press media business to Link ICA (director A. Davies). No mention of this connection is made in the 2000 accounts, the latest available, for P&O Stena Line.

The next year Govett announced that P&O Stena was launching a website to improve its marketing. This contract too went to Link ICA which handled the website and customer relations strategy.

Now Link, whose turnover has jumped from just £2.5m before Davies joined to nearly £8m last year, has landed the contract for advertising all P&O Ferries, worth £7m in the UK alone. The billings were previously split between four agencies.

Announcing the move Govett told the trade magazine *Campaign*: "Link ICA has developed a major creative idea, which we believe will be a step change in ferry advertising. We believe its solution is a key move which will set us apart from our competitors." No mention of his wife's role in that "major creative idea".

"If, at the end of the day, you can't have fun, what's the point?"

Link ICA's chairman Roger Dexter explained: "Our creative and strategic strengths have developed through a fundamental understanding of the businesses, challenges and opportunities the ferry industry faces."

And who better to provide that understanding than husband John and wife Annette? After all, keeping it in the family is something with which City grandee Jeffrey Sterling is no doubt in full agreement as a watchdog over shareholder value.

LEADING City merchant bank Lazard Brothers has quietly settled an embarrassing case which accused it of conspiring to assist in the looting of the offshore estate of Norwegian ship owner Anders Jahre. Lazards is understood to have settled the civil case brought in Norway by Jahre's estate by paying almost £30m.

Lazards and former vice chairman Lord Kindersley had initially been sued in 1996 for £120m. The trial began last year but was then halted due to the illness of the other defendant, former Lazards executive Bjorn Bettum. Bettum has since died.

Lazards agreed to a settlement late last year thereby avoiding some damaging publicity regarding its role and the necessity of Lord Kindersley and Prince Charles' chum and former Lazards executive Lord Tryon having to give evidence.

The case revolved around the creation by Jahre of the Continental Foundation in the Bahamas in 1976. This was run by his trusted lieutenant Thorleif Monsen. Lazards was the manager and custodian of Continental. Kindersley was one of three advisers with Monsen. The aim of the trust was to hide Jahre's assets from the Norwegian taxman.

When Jahre died in 1982 most of the Continental assets – then worth $82m – were transferred through a trapdoor in the trust to the separate Aall Foundation established by Monsen in the Cayman Islands. Monsen died in 1992.

Since Jahre's death his estate and the Norwegian tax authorities have been in pursuit of the fortune which had its origins in a tanker Jahre used to supply oil to the Nazis during the war. The value of the offshore fortune is put at up to £75m.

A tax fraud case was brought against Bettum in which the Serious Farce Office assisted by gathering evidence from Lazards and questioning Kindersley and Tryon. The criminal case was still pending at the time of Bettum's death.

The Jahre estate was also hit with a large tax claim which it is still fighting. The civil action brought by the estate accused Lazards and Kindersley of being negligent in allowing Monsen to seize control of the Continental assets and lose money in self-serving deals. The bank was accused of actively assisting in passing control of the assets to Monsen and hiding the existence of the offshore fortune from the estate. The writ claimed that misuse of the Jahre millions was not possible unless those involved failed in their duties.

Lazards was sued for £44m in lost capital plus £68m in lost interest plus interest on the tax claim – figures which had grown with the passing years – plus costs.

Lazards always denied any wrongdoing; but after five years of legal battle it appears to have decided a settlement was better than opening up the Jahre can of fat worms. As part of the settlement Lazards has accepted that Jahre always controlled the Panamanian company Continental Trust which owned his shipping empire and has agreed to provide documents on the offshore assets to the estate.

THE poor performance of the Bank of England's new deputy governor Sir Andrew Large before the Commons treasury select committee last week did not surprise those in the City who were amazed by the decision to give him such a high profile post. Despite a long and distinguished City career, the ambitious Large is a man who has found little difficulty in generating criticism among those who ran into him during his previous roles at the Securities & Investments Board and then Barclays Bank.

While hailed as a hero by some over the Maxwell scandal, Large and SIB were seen by others, including Tory ministers, to have responded too slowly over pension mis-selling. At Barclays there were complaints that he wanted too big a role and participated too much in the power battle that eventually resulted in the departure of chief executive Martin Taylor.

According to some, Large saw himself as a possible Barclays chairman but was soon disabused of that possibility by the incumbent Aubrey Buxton. His role was later downgraded.

Tasked with overseeing financial stability at the Bank, Large's enemies suspect that this will not be sufficient to satisfy his ambitions. They wonder whether it will be long before he is eyeing the succession to Sir Edward George due to take place next year.

THOSE wondering what ever happened to the criminal proceedings against rogue Morgan Grenfell fund manager Peter aka Elizabeth Young may have to wait on into next year for a

THE DIRECTORS

DREDGE/RIGG

...BUT YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND, IT'S VITAL TO RURAL CULTURE...
SAVE THE HUNT!
NO TO BAN!
OH, COME, COME - IT'S JUST A TRADITION NOW...
...VERY ROMANTIC AND ALL THAT BUT IT HAS NO PLACE IN MODERN DAY BRITAIN...
...NO, I'M SORRY, BUT FARMING'S FINISHED AND THAT'S THE END OF IT!
SAVE THE HUNT
NO BAN!

Stock Horror

Bob Mendelsohn, departing chief executive of Royal & SunAlliance

Winners and losers from his five years at the top...

Shareholders	£5.4m
–£7,700m	Mendelsohn

conclusion to this long-running saga.

Young last surfaced in December 2000 when he was found unfit to be tried, following a second hearing, as a result of his change in dress code and bizarre history of self-harm. Conflicting evidence was given by psychiatrists as to whether he was faking or exaggerating schizophrenia and the resulting gender crisis.

It was then announced that, as usual in such cases, there would be a hearing on the facts to decide what was to be done about him. If it was found that he had done the acts claimed, which cost Deutsche Morgan Grenfell £400m – though without any question of a conviction – the judge could make a supervision order regarding his future treatment.

Since then silence. Young's alleged co-conspirators, three brokers and a former fellow MG fund manager, have all since been either discharged or acquitted. Still there is silence.

What it appears is happening behind the scenes is that Young is awaiting a decision on a possible appeal to the law lords over the failure of an application last March for a judicial review over the evidence of personal gain to be presented to any future jury that will consider the facts. Facts that now go back to 1996 and beyond.

No date has yet been set for that appeal so no date has yet been set for the trial of the facts. Whether these delays and the possibility that Young too may be found not to have done anything wrong are aiding his recovery and return to wearing suits remains to be seen.

"This is unfair dismissal – that serpent verbally harassed me!"

WHAT promises to be an even longer haul for the SFO is the investigation into suspected over-charging and price fixing by those companies providing certain proprietary medicines to the National Health Service.

Six companies were raided in April and some three million documents seized. Such is the evidence overload that the SFO has had to contract out the work to four outside teams of accountants. Assessing the seized documents is estimated to take at least until the end of the year. Only then will a decision be possible on whether or not there has been any criminal offence – a matter disputed not just by the companies but even by some with knowledge of the case.

However, the SFO may have had some good luck. It is said that it now has an insider who is assisting with its examination and interpretation of the documents it seized. If so that would be one step nearer making a case. But the key is to have someone who can testify at a high enough level to implicate the company bosses. Whether that is yet the case is unclear.

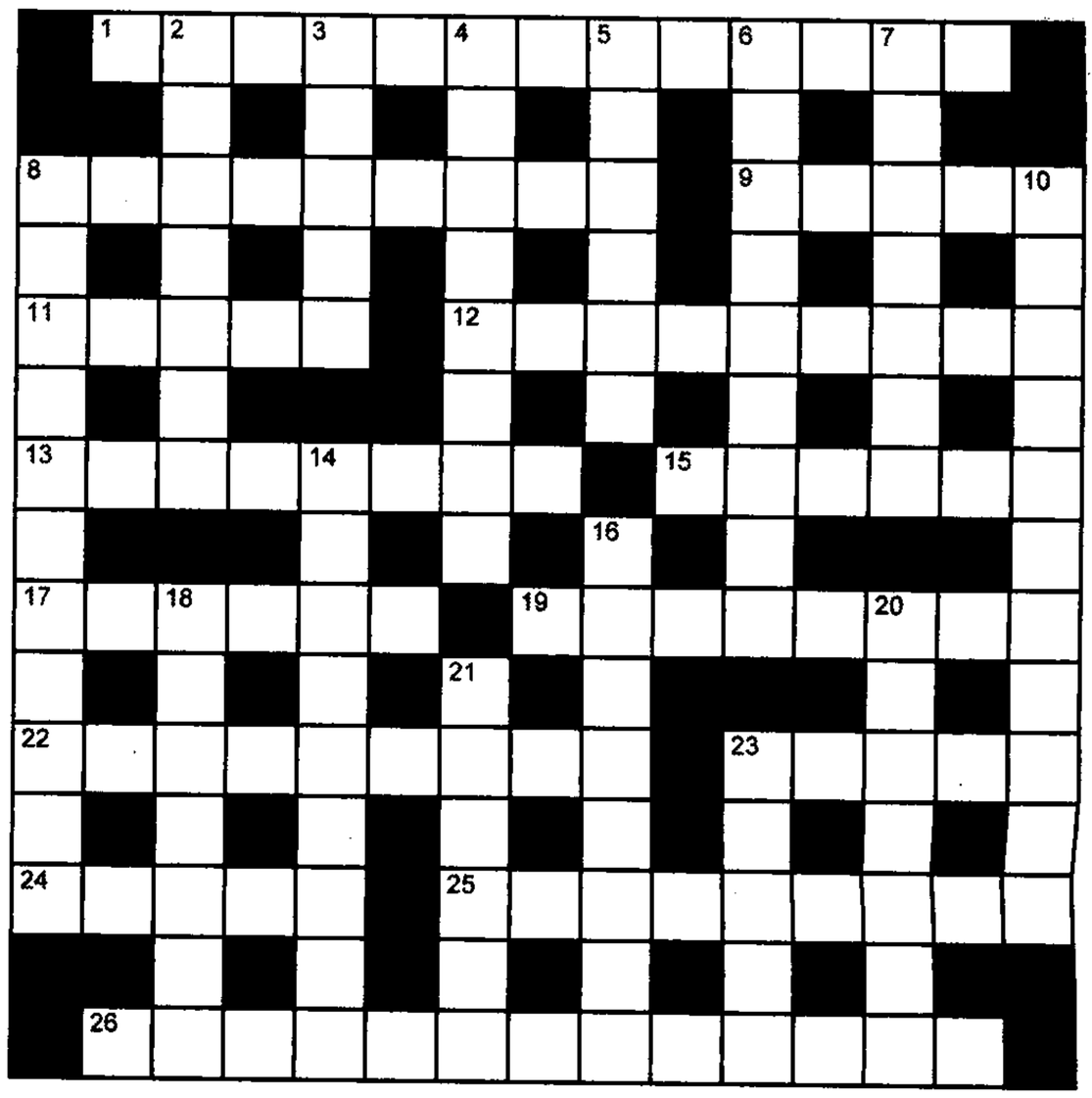
'Slicker'

EYE CROSSWORD 219

by Cyclops

£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 11 October 2002.

Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN or via email to crossword@private-eye.co.uk



ACROSS

1 Panty line hogger? (5,8)
8 Nut-case goes to clubs in naff outfit (5,4)
9 Though head not given, semen spilt on aide's top could provoke an urgent motion (5)
11 Examinations of head once removed (5)
12 Lake, at one point, wants blow job "without one getting smeared" (9)
13/10 Utter, on receiving head from Monica: "Give pants!", being unwarrantedly boastful (3,5,3,8)
15 The Speaker arses about, grabbing Lawrence's foremost pair (6)
17 Cleverly describe crap that doesn't begin to get tasteless (3,3)
19 Stink about politician unconscious next to Posh and ex-president (8)
22 Camilla's top now under bust – a description of her lover's continuing frustrated state? (9)
23 Grant has one vice not requiring Divine initially (5)
24 Bent copper talked bollocks (5)
25 Standing with Eliot, a member might be pressed to attain it (9)
26 Post-match move by one player on another's genitalia (7,6)

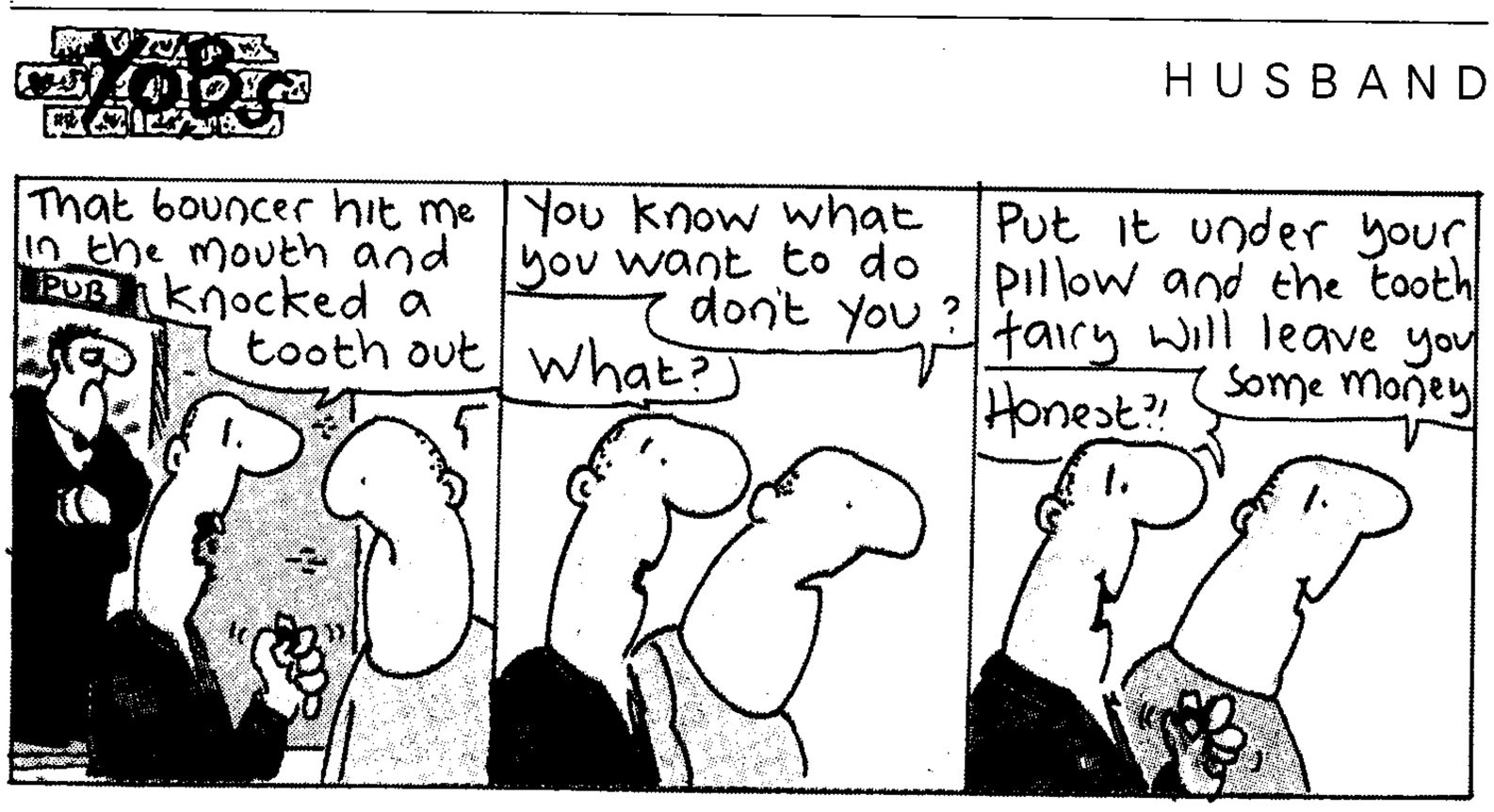
DOWN

2 Look on shag abroad as attempt to face down (7)
3 Violet's going without sex – rats! (5)
4 Garden visitors low on melons (4,4)
5 Diner gives 'Swampy' a change of direction (6)
6 Obvious feature of Dolly Parton's traditional entertainment venue (3,3,3)
7 *Observer*'s range of mags (sexy) (7)
8 Might be used on one who overdoses bear trainer (7-4)
10 See 13 Across
14 Unwell, pissed and dumped (9)
16 A chickeny feeling, not hot dogs (4,4)
18 Partial to a feel? Be a luvvie, finish off the wall outside (7)
20 One-time minister's right about getting gobbled by model (7)
21 One after another, reportedly, for Lewinsky under Clinton (6)
23 A tricky thing, TV co-presenter getting one on cocaine (5)

Crossword 218 winner: IAIN ARCHER

ACROSS: 1 Well-built 6 Vibes 9 Begum 10 Fixations 11 Emperor 12 Earldom 13/21 Churchillian gesture 16 Holding forth 19 Fanatic 23 San Marino 24 Idiom 25 Tests 26 Tumescent.

DOWN: 1 Webbed 2 Leg-up 3 Bum around 4 Infer 5 Tax relief 6 Voter 7 Blood-bath 8 Sesame 13 Crownings 14 Conscript 15 Lordships 17 Offset 18 Permit 20 Twats 21 Groom 22 Urine.


Yobs
HUSBAND
That bouncer hit me in the mouth and knocked a tooth out
PUB
You know what you want to do don't you?
What?
Put it under your pillow and the tooth fairy will leave you some money
Honest?!

...to find out more about this campaign visit www.barnardos.org.uk 0845 456 0658

Barnardo's

www.zurichpremiership.com

Your lungs burn.

You feel dizzy.

Your legs feel like lead.

Championing rugby.

ZURICH

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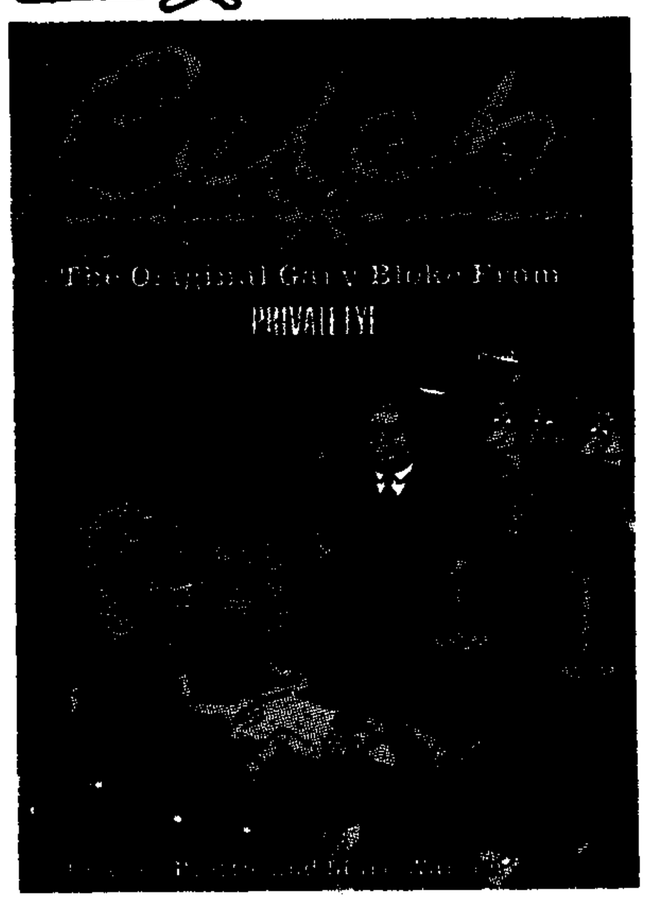

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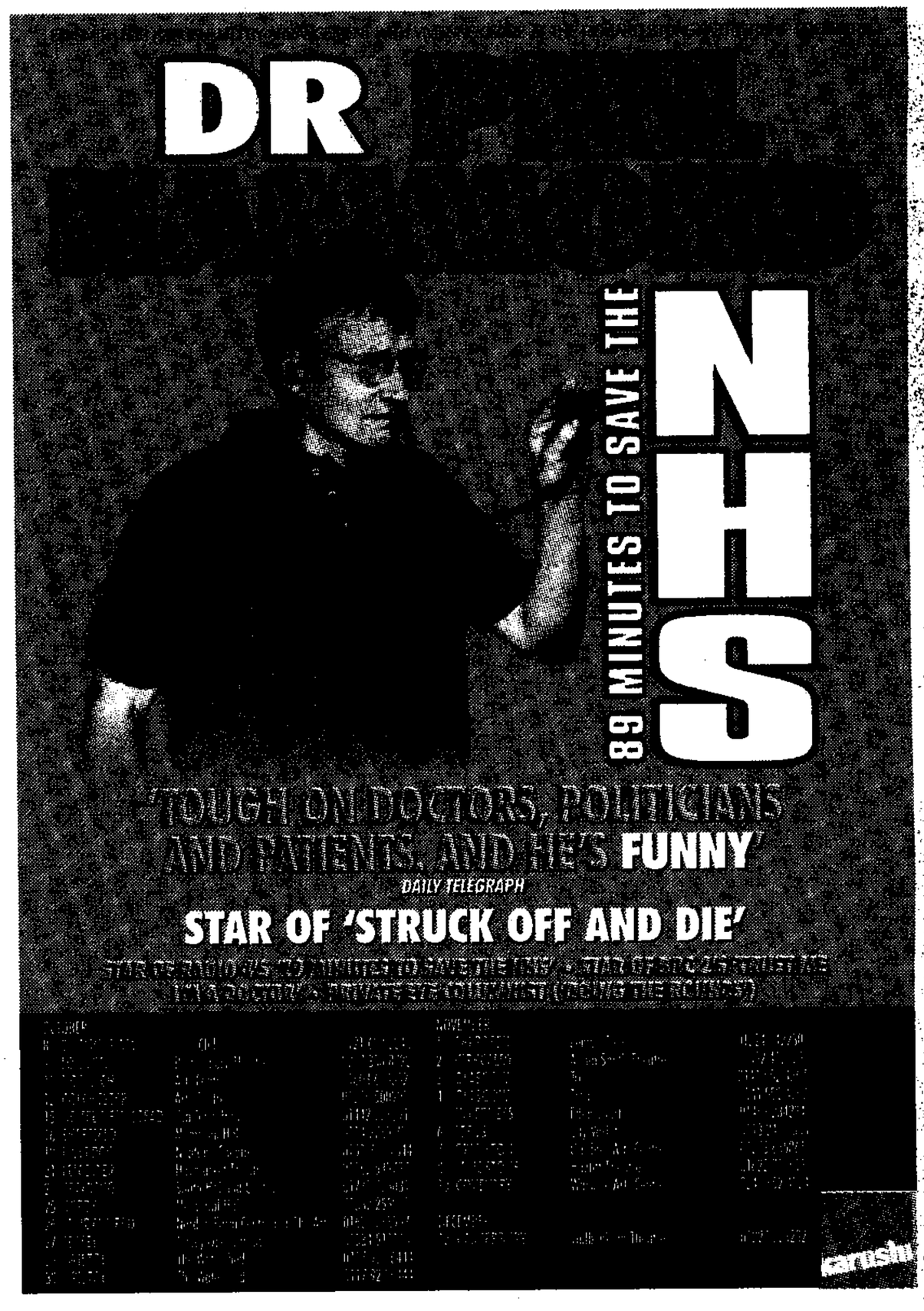
DR
89 MINUTES TO SAVE THE
NHS
'TOUGH ON DOCTORS, POLITICIANS AND PATIENTS, AND HE'S FUNNY'
DAILY TELEGRAPH
STAR OF 'STRUCK OFF AND DIE'

Northern Ireland 1974

On the 17th May 1974 a series of no warning car bombs exploded in Dublin & Monaghan killing 33 people.
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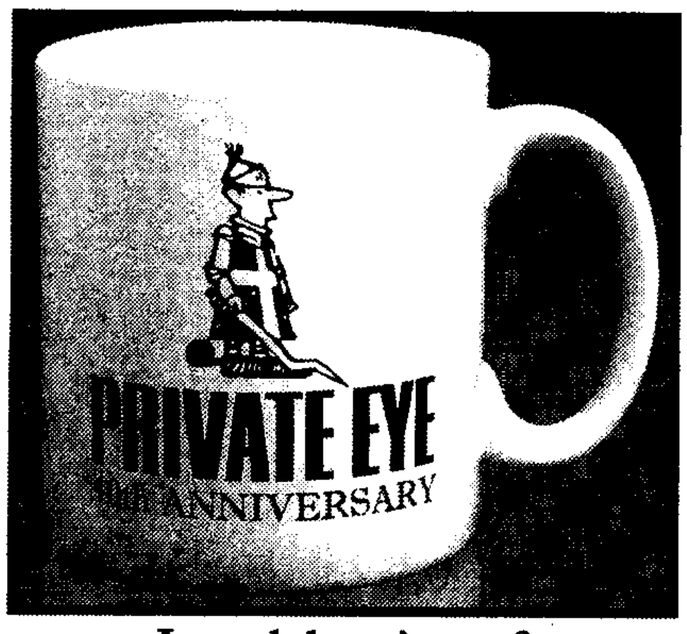

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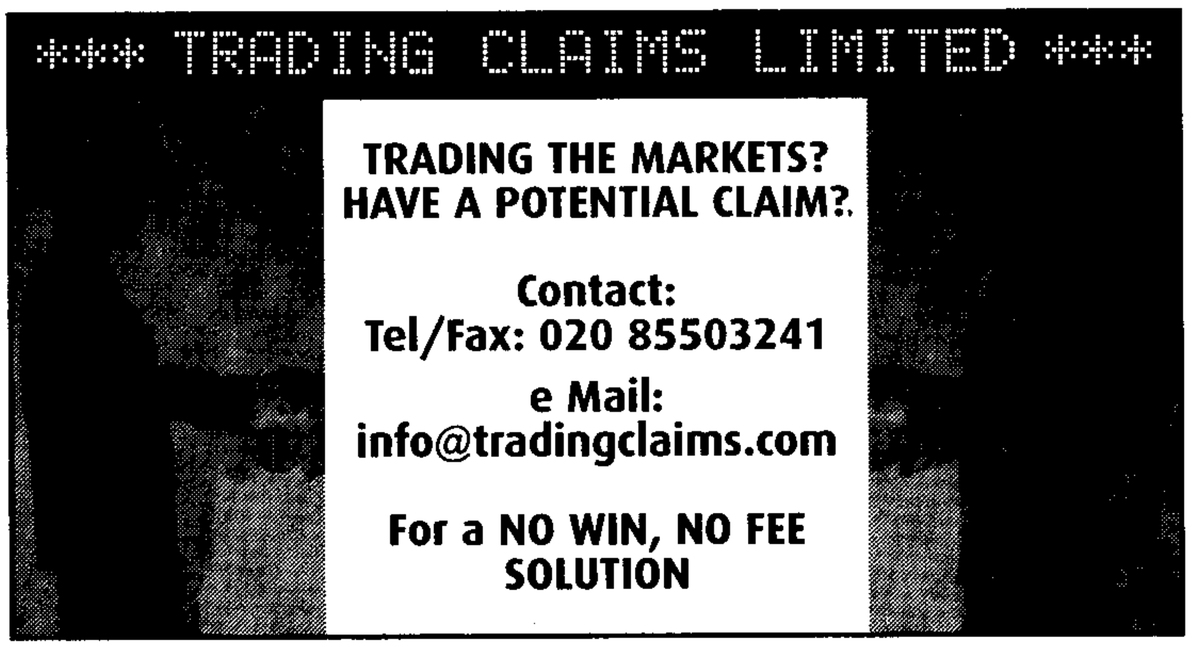

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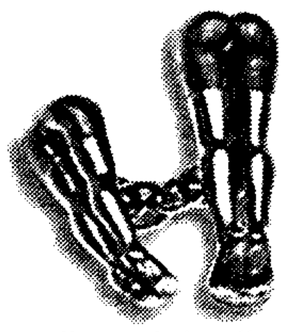

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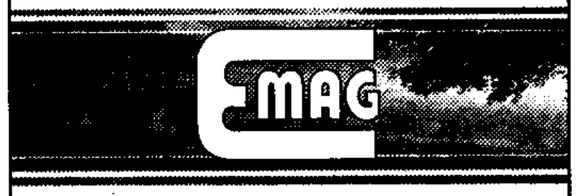

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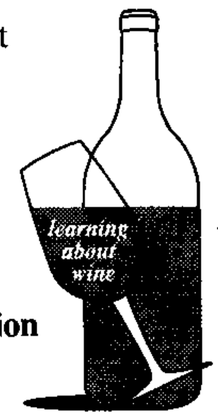

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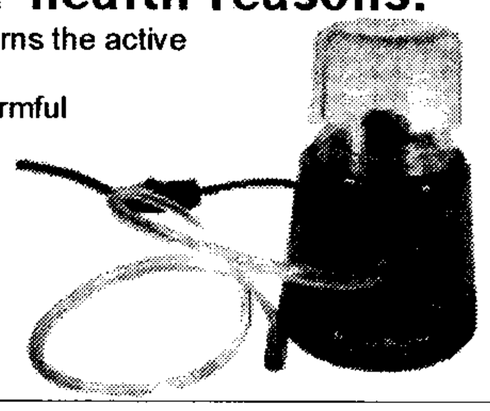

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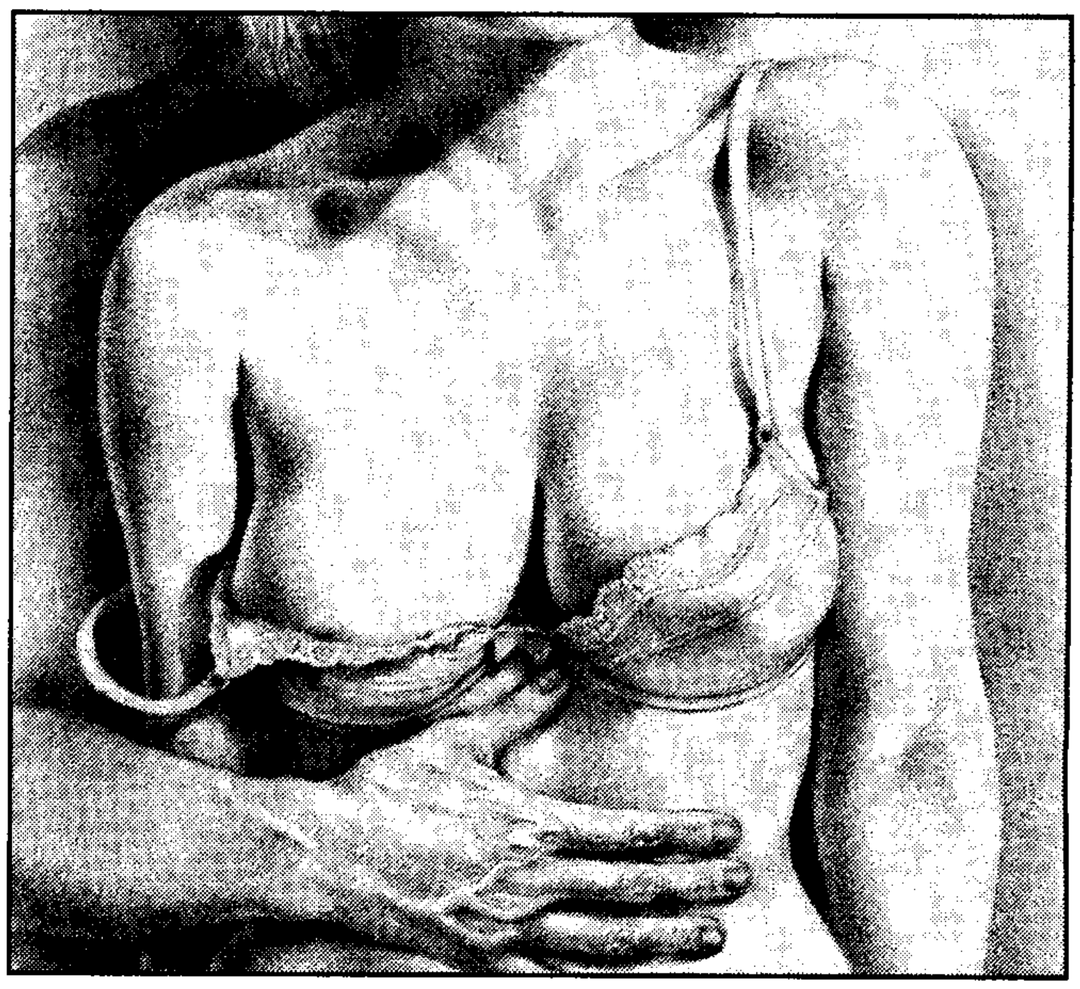

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TALENTED young portrait artist seeks financial help. Call Mark 07719 116411.

GIGGLESWICK. Funds needed to send gifted 7 year old daughter to Giggleswick School. Box 0464.

LIFE SAVINGS STOLEN EN-ROUTE TO HAVANA; Courtesy of the bloody USA, and their virtually unknown Helms-Burton "Agreement" Donations gratefully received by Paul and Sarah to commence legal action in the USA with Washington to rightfully regain dignity, status and our bloody money. All correspondence acknowledged. LTSB 77-67-06 16651068 or Box 0964.

OLD SOLDIER losing home to conman. Help me stay independent. Desperate for £13K. Please help. LloydsTSB 77-50-12, 24923160.

HELP ME FLY. £40000 for Commercial Helicopter Licence. Barclays 20-35-93, 70944262 - needhelilicence@hotmail.com

TALENTED SINGLE needs £20K to pay off debts and fund Music College. All help gratefully received. NatWest 60-17-12, 88622800.

FIGHTING BENEFITS AGENCY to claim JSA. over £60K of debts, 4 children and in danger of losing family and house. Desperate. Please help Natwest 60-06-18, 50556738.

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CATHOLIC PRIEST urgently needs funds for chapel. THANKS – vocationone@aol.com or box 1161.

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32F SEEKS 32K. Fire destroyed home and relationship, unlikely to win luxury apartment. Lloyds 77-71-62, 08696568.

DESPERATE JUNIOR DOCTOR needs £8K to begin debt repayment. Day job + locums insufficient. Please help. Account 3472808, sort 30-95-42.

AUSSIE CHICK needs £5k to escape TNT-readers' hostel 40-09-13 41519271.

PAGAN CIRCLE SEEKS moderate expansion funds. Beneficial spells cast for all contributors. 20-62-68 40707317

DAMSEL DESPERATE to finish studies. Please help. Halifax 11-04-65 00452822.

UNFAIRLY LOST Court Case. Must pay £130,000. Losing family home. Husband disabled. Desperate. Sort Code 40-16-46 Account 51168037. Box 0364.

£40,000 URGENTLY needed to start Oxford University Phd on migration and identity HSBC 40-11-13, 41238175.

MARRIED 8 YEARS, 5 year old wonderful son. Our strongly held family values are under immense pressure because of our £50,000 debt (result of depression).Please help 3 people to fulfill their potential and start to enjoy life again. Not enough words to express gratitude. Bank Lloyds 30-97-51 001386942.

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UNDISCOVERED children's writer/illustrator driven by own creativity in truly embarrassing financial mess. Any help hugely appreciated and acknowledged. Nwide: sort 07-01-16 47714625.

HARD WORKING NURSE helped others as long as I can remember. Now needs help herself. £25K spiraling debts. Please help genuinely grateful for 2nd chance. Clydesdale Sortcode: 826506 A/N 30181041.

FLEDGLING DOMINATRIX seeks financial assistance to dominate full-time. All donors will be suitably punished. NW607003 84202734.

PLEASE HELP! Graduates debt – need £12,000 or anything available – NATWEST 60-03-32 86296590.

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GENUINE, SLIM, attractive younger lady sought as friend/lover by fit late fifties man. Photo please. S/East. Box 0463.

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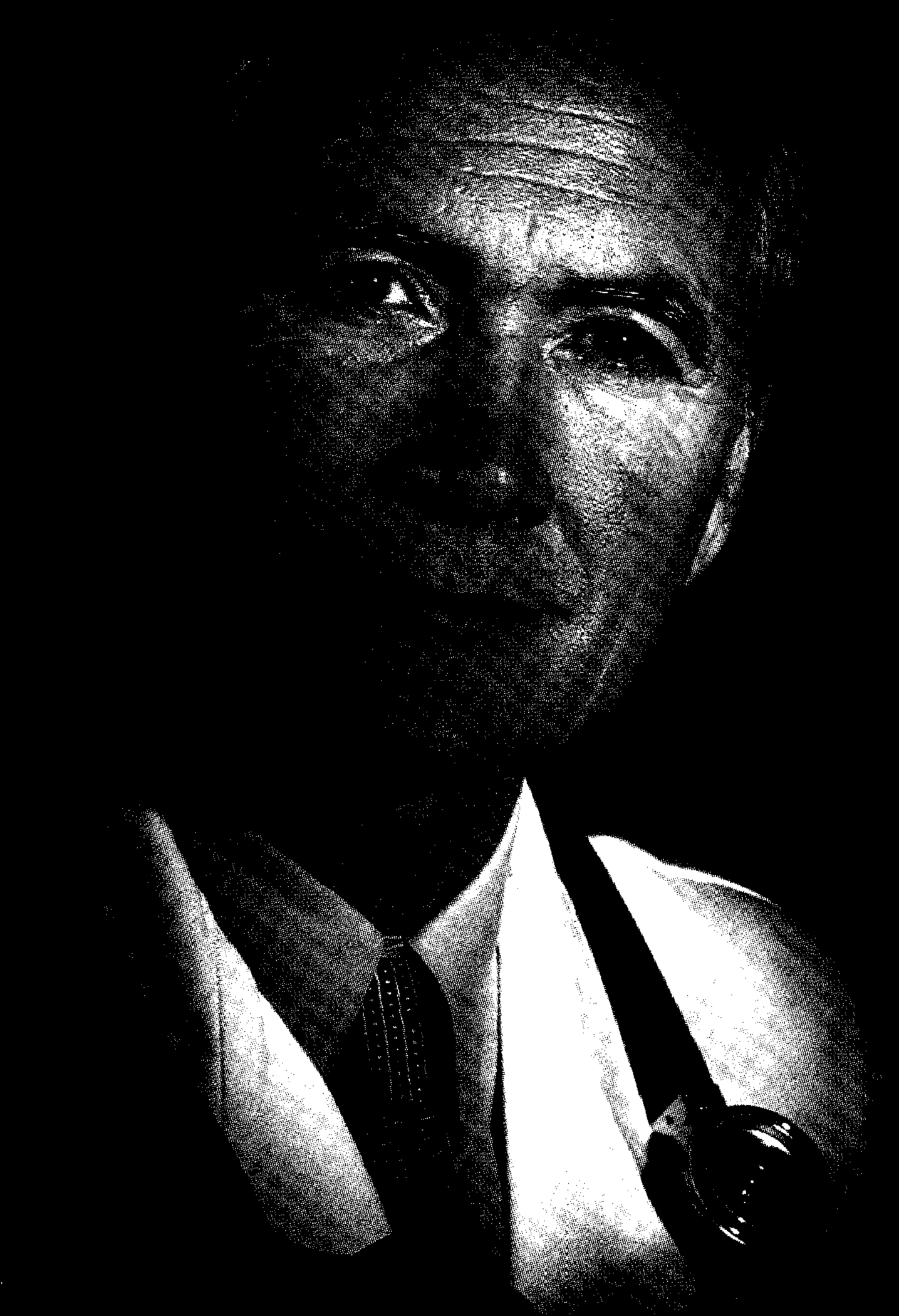

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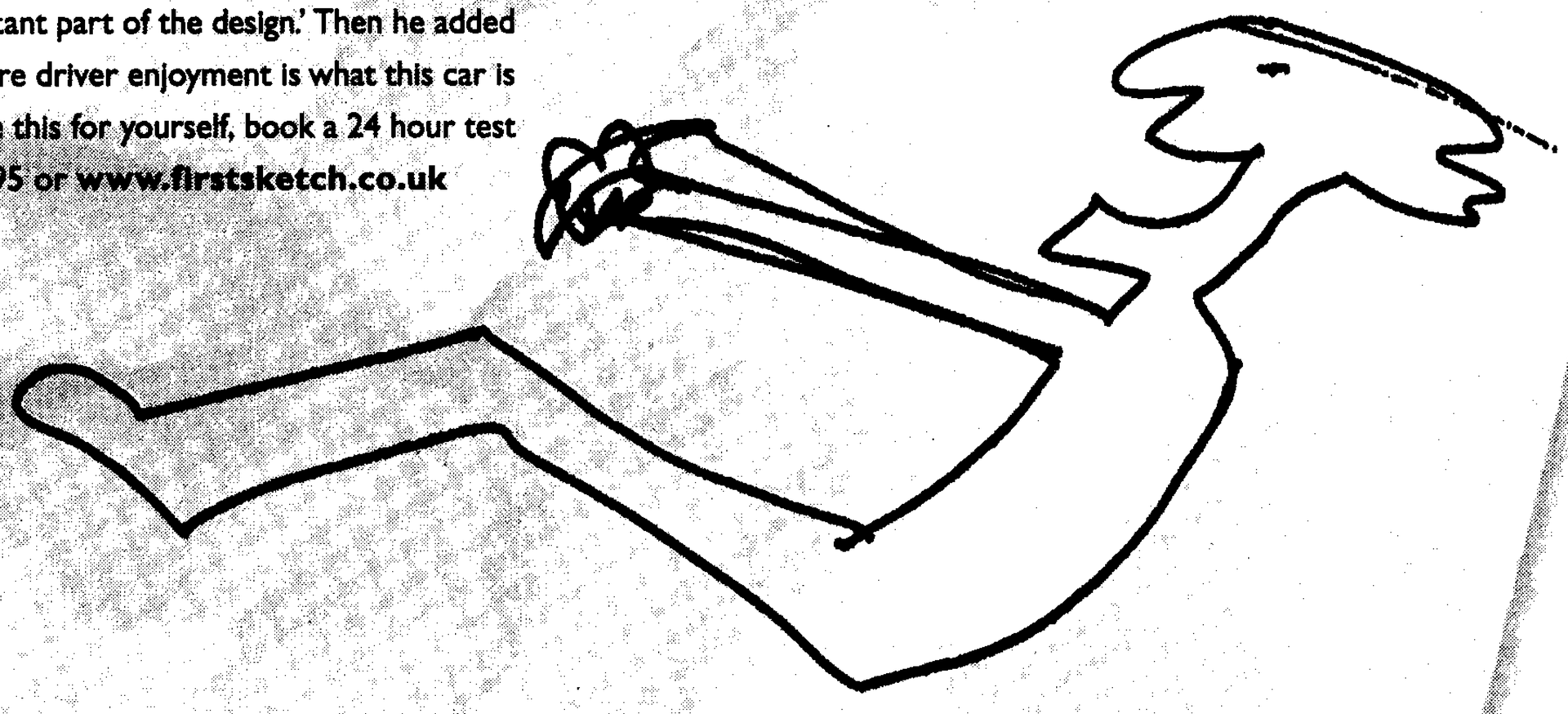

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